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Under Dead Leaves.

W. E. Windus.

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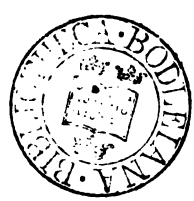
UNDER DEAD LEAVES

AND OTHER POEMS.

By W. E. WINDUS.

"———me quoque pectoris
Tentavit in dulci juventâ
Fervor, et in celeres iambos
Misit furentem : nunc ego mitibus
Mutare quæro tristia—"

HORACE.



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JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, PICCADILLY.
1871.

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UNDER DEAD LEAVES.

THE lofty mountains rose distinct and clear,
Showing, though distant, every sun-lit crag
And purple chasm, through the transparent air;
The bracing breeze bore odours of the autumn;
From the fields, an aromatic scent of burning herbs
Heaped on the fallows; from the mossy woods
Perfume of pine cones, that had fallen and burst
Amid the faded foliage of the ferns;
And every tree, except the greedy oaks
That clung like misers to their ruddy gold,
Had rained around their roots a spendthrift shower
Of leafy riches.
By a path
Winding between the boles of ivied trees
And rugged rocks, tangled and bound with briers,
That glowed with scarlet and pale orange fronds,

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Crimson-enspotted as with sprinkled blood,
Stole on, with stealthy step and watchful eye,
A man, who started at the slightest sound
Made by the rustling rabbit, or the wings
Of timorous doves that clattered from the firs.
Yet his appearance showed him not of those
Who haunt the woods to wage illicit war
On pamper'd pheasants, or who snare the hare—
Perchance to bring new life to starving homes.
He was no poacher, for his well-cut clothes
And jewell'd fingers proved that he was there
On no such errand; still he crept along
The narrow clearing, peering here and there
As though in dread, and bearing in his hand
A heavy gardener's spade. Reaching, then,
The rough-hewn framework, where, in foul array,
Hung many a cat and hawk, and stoat, and owl—
The vermin gibbet that the keeper raised—
He paused and shudder'd at the mouldering forms
Swinging suspended from their several nails,
And hurrying on more swiftly, left the path
And struck at once amid the tangled wood,

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Forcing his way among the hindering boughs
Until he reach'd a dell, where all the soil
Was moist and soft; there, scraping back the leaves
That lay around, commenc'd to use the spade;
And working with all will, soon form'd a pit
Narrow and long, and several feet in depth.
Then with great care he thinly spread the soil
That had been taken from the narrow trench,
And smooth'd it down, and filling up the pit
With fallen branches, placed therein the spade,
And covered up his work with wither'd leaves;
And having hidden every trace he could
Of such strange labour, hasten'd from the wood,
Across the fields, and passing through a park
All full of antler'd deer, he reach'd a door
Hid in the ivy of a massive wall;
And drawing forth a key, he oped the door,
And from a garden, dense with frost-struck flowers,
Entered a grand old mansion's oaken hall,
Where, from a servant's salver, he received
A foreign letter, formally addressed,
To the most honourable Earl of Champerlys.

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Twelve years anterior to that letter's date,
The former lord of all the vast domain
Of wood, and hill, and cultivated land,
That stretched around the mansion many a mile,
Lay on his death-bed, injured by a fall
While he was hunting—and his only child
And heir, a rosy boy of some five years of age—
His mother having died in giving him birth—
He left entirely to his brother's care:
This trust, the younger brother of the Earl
Accepted in all honour, and the boy,
Loving his uncle as he was beloved,
Prosper'd and throve beneath his guardian's rule.

One fine spring morning, when the ruby buds
Bursting, had changed to emeralds on the limes,
And all the air was balmy with the breath
Of coming summer, to his uncle's room,
The little fellow, wild with childhood's glee,
Came to remind him of an expected treat;
For it had been a promise, lately made,
That on the first warm morning he should go

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Down to the sands, and in his uncle's boat
Visit an island where the sea-birds bred
In countless thousands; so they both set forth
Across the meadows, reach'd the ebbing sea,
That spread a sheet of glass above the sands,
And entering the boat, pushed from the shore.
Then drawing near the island, all the sky
Grew white with snowy wings of wheeling birds,
Swooping around them with discordant cries,
And when they landed, all the wither'd turf
Teem'd thick with spotted eggs and callow young,
And little Harold clapt his tiny hands,
In all amazement, at the curious scene.
Then, having wound the line that held the boat
Securely round a stone, the uncle drove
His little skiff again upon the tide,
To keep it well afloat till their return;
And he and Harold wander'd round the isle,
A dreary waste of turf, and heavy banks
Of porous wave-wash'd stones, where nothing grew
But sprouting poppies, that in later months
Would deck the sea-marge with a robe of gold.

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They reach'd again the line that held the boat,
And roll'd the stone—the tide still ebbing—
Nearer to the sea ; and then being tempted
By the warm soft day, the uncle said :
" Sit here, my Harold, I intend to bathe ;
And do not stir, and do not touch the line,
But watch the boat, and if you see the tide
Begin to leave it, quickly call to me ;
For I shall only be behind that bank,
Where I can hear the moment that you call."
(They stood upon the isle's extremest point,
That ran a line of shingle to the sea.)
Then from his pockets drawing forth some cakes,
Together with a flask of water'd wine,
He spread them on the stone beside the boy,
And then retired, still calling as he went,
" Be sure, dear Harold, that you do not stir."
He linger'd some ten minutes in the sea,
And having partly dressed again called out,
" Sit still, my boy, you have not long to wait."
And, hearing no reply, at once climb'd up
The pebbly ridge and found the boy was gone ;

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He stood aghast, the boat had vanished too !
" O God !" he cried, and though he could not swim,
Dash'd in the water, struggling back half-drown'd,
To shout and rave upon the barren shore ;
For there the boat, some hundred yards away,
Was driving sea-ward with the racing tide,
And little Harold standing in the stern,
With hands extended, asking help in vain.

Then, crunching on the stones, he heard a step,
And saw approaching him a dark-brow'd man
Bearing a gun, the barrel painted green ;
And from his belt depending many a bird
With blood-besprinkled breast, and broken wing ;
And drawing near, he recognised the man,
A most notorious poacher—" Swarthy Will "—
Who, when the game was breeding, pass'd his time,
In seeking for the stuffer curious birds—
For no wise law protected sea-fowl then,
And many a nestling slowly starved to death,
Its parents slain by Will's most murderous gun.

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The uncle, trembling, pointed to the boat—
He could not speak for grief—and Swarthy Will,
Drawing still nearer, doff'd his greasy cap,
And peering at him from his heavy brows,
Said, "You have work'd it well, my lord the Earl,
For earl, I fancy, you will shortly be,
The sea-fog spreading from that bank of clouds
Advances quickly; twenty minutes hence,
And you have look'd your last at yon poor lad,
Unless some vessel pick him up at sea;
But have no fear, the weather means a change,
Long before night the wind will blow a gale."

And then the uncle, staring with amaze—
He stood as in a stupor—turn'd to Will:
"What mean you?" said he; "Can you save my boy,
My little nephew?—Oh! for God's dear love,
Think, find some way that we may reach the boat!"
And then the man—half scowling as he smiled—
Said, "You have work'd it well, most noble lord;
Here we must wait until the tide be low,
Then I will guide you safely to the shore,

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The channels now would take us over head,
And all the sands are quick, and this vile fog
Will make it still more hard to find our way:
But I have here a compass in my pouch,
And you may trust me, I will guide you back—
And rest content—if you but treat me well—
That I will keep all secret that I saw,
When I lay crouching under yonder rock."
Then Harold's uncle, starting from the man:
"You keep all secret? Tell me what you mean."
And Will replying: "As I lay conceal'd,
Waiting to get a shot at two rare birds,
Floating just out of range upon the tide,
My dog's low growling told me, sure enough,
We were not all alone upon the isle;
And then I saw your lordship and the boy,
And knowing how you stood as next of kin,
Should anything befall him, thought to watch,
And saw you place the youngster in the boat,
Unloose the rope, and push him from the shore,
Then you retir'd behind that bank to bathe—
You really work'd it well, my lord the Earl!

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And do not fear, the boy is nought to me,
For twice his father shut me up in gaol.
But you my lord "—And then the uncle saw
All his base meaning.—" Villain, get you gone!"
He cried, "and leave me here;" but Swarthy Will,
Seizing his arm, said, " No, it cannot be;
I must wait with you till the sands be dry,
When I can follow you and tell my tale."
Then, in the uncle's veins the brave old blood
Stirred; and the poacher, staggering, almost fell
Before the heavy blow the other dealt,
But soon recovering, closing with the lord,
Commenc'd a struggle on the misty isle
Amid the clamouring gulls, and neither spoke,
But tried all means to gain a surer grip.
Both men were strong, but Swarthy Will at last—
His arms were iron—getting first a hold,
Swung his opponent heavily to earth,
And placed his knee upon his heaving chest,
And held him firmly till his breath return'd.
The uncle spoke again: " Oh! why this lie?
You say you saw us, then you surely know

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I left my little nephew on the shore,
Watching the boat? The truth is always strong—
The boy may yet be saved, and still return
To prove my words:" and Swarthy Will replied—
Scowling and sneering with sardonic smile—
"The truth is strong, no doubt, but I, you see,
Am somewhat stronger; should the boy be sav'd,
My game is up—but that I little fear;
The wind will follow with the rising tide—
It whispers mischief now among the hills—
And yon frail boat will scarcely live an hour:
Yes, you may tell your tale with all due truth,
But think you not the world will deem it strange—
Without my version of this little plot—
That you should bring your nephew here alone,
Return without him, saying, he is lost?
Your word is good, no doubt, but mine is strong,
For I gain nothing by the reckling's death,
And you an earldom, and a mine of wealth;
Better be wise, and let me help you out
From this quandary, for the world has tongues,
And spiteful tongues, as I have often prov'd;

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Better by far retain me on your side,
My terms will not be hard, and I can be
Either your faithful servant or your foe."

The other then, half-sickening at the thought
Of what might follow, bade him move his knee,
"And tell me shortly what you want," he said;
"To tell the simple truth: you hold me here
At disadvantage, and your cunning web
Is wove around me, and I fain must yield;
Although I loathe myself for bandying words
With such as you; but tell me what you want,
And name the sum, for I perforce must stay
The wanton mischief of your lying tongue."

Then Will remov'd his knee, and help'd him rise,
"I do not want your gold, my lord," he said,
"For such slight service: give me but the place
Of your head-keeper, and the little house
That now stands empty in the Abbot's wood;
I ask no more, and I will serve you well."
And Harold's uncle pondering for a while,

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Thought that the rascal, having seen a chance
For bettering himself, had but behaved
As men do ever, when they gain the power;
Weakly consenting, promised him the place.
And Will—at once subservient—touch'd his cap,
Saying, "I think, my lord, the tide has ebb'd
Enough to serve us. Trust my dog and me
To guide you safely, though the dense sea-fog
Hangs heavy on the sands, nor need we use
Even the compass; for my stanch old dog
Has never fail'd me yet by night or day,
Even when I myself have lost the road."
Then, boldly stepping on the treacherous sands,
That stretch'd around them many a weary mile,
They gained the shingle, and the uncle passed
All-sorrowing homewards, mourning for the boy
So loved, so lost; and Swarthy Will return'd
Back to his hovel, muttering as he went,
"The fog is clearing but the wind will come."

Dread consternation reign'd throughout the house,
When Harold's uncle told them of the fate

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That happen'd to the boy; and many whispers rose
Of something strange, but all the servants knew
How well the uncle loved the gentle boy;
And slander's tongue was quickly stricken dumb.

Throughout the night the uncle paced his room,
Waiting for daylight to commence a search,
Through all the islands for the missing boy;
But as each hour the raging wind increas'd,
Moaning in dirge-like music through the pines,
So every hour his anxious hopes decreas'd.
Then with the first faint gleam of gathering day,
He roused the household, and with every boat
That they could hire or borrow, put to sea.
They searched the several islets in the bay,
And every likely spot, but all in vain;
The last drench'd crew had landed,
And they all gave up the quest as fruitless,
Till they saw a tall strong man approach;
And many recognising Swarthy Will, at once
Sped on to meet him—for he knew the tides
Better than any there—but Swarthy Will,

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Replying nothing to their questions ask'd,
Strode on in sulky silence till he reach'd
The sorrowing uncle; to him speaking first—
"I have found something," said he, "on the shore;
I could have told you it were wasted time,
To search the islands with a tide like this;
But I have found the boat, the boy, no doubt,
Lies many a fathom deep far out at sea;
Nor will his body rise for many days,
And then may drift—no man could tell you where."
So following Will, they saw the broken boat,
Lying half buried in a muddy creek;
And all felt certain then of Harold's fate.

A week or two elapsed before the Earl—
For he attain'd the rank as next of kin—
Had seen or even heard of Swarthy Will;
Until one morning, walking in the park,
He met the fellow sauntering up the drive.
"I come," he said, "to mind you of your word,
The place you promised;" and the Earl replied,—
"I do not break my word, the place is yours;

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The house is ready in the Abbot's wood,
Take it, and do your duty if you can;
And let me see as little of your face
As it be possible. Anything you want,
Ask from the steward, do not trouble me."

Then all the servants muttered when they heard,
The Earl's strange choice, and many murmurs rose,
But Will cared little—Mr. William now—
His end being gained, could hold them all at bay.
And so he lived at ease within the wood,
Doing, at first, his duty, and the Earl
Saw little of him, for he never joined
His sporting friends himself; but all declar'd
The Earl's new keeper, though a very brute
In looks and manner, always found them sport,
And understood his craft in every way.

At last there came a change, for though the Earl
Paid heavily for eggs, and rearing birds,
The game diminished; and with empty bags,
His friends return'd to grumble day by day;

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And begged the Earl to join them for an hour,
To see the wretched state of his preserves.
At last the Earl, consenting, took his gun,
And went with many beaters through the woods,
And found but little, all the game was gone :
So speaking to a keeper, sent for Will,
Ordering his presence, but the man return'd
Quickly to say that "William could not come."
Then, with his friends, the Earl in anger went
To Abbot's wood, and entering the house,
Found Will in high carouse with several men,
Who seem'd to be the scum of all the shire ;
And speaking to him of the lack of game,
Will, scarcely rising, gave a rough reply :
The Earl then left without another word,
Though many hinted at the man's discharge ;
And even when a beater came to say,
That he knew partly where the game had gone,
The Earl, half-frowning, push'd the lad aside,
Saying, "'Tis no great matter, let it rest :"
And many wonder'd as they wander'd home.

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As time went on, although the game decreas'd,
The Earl's head-keeper ever kept a sway
Over his master, that astonish'd all;
And every servant fear'd the dark-brow'd man
Who held such power, detesting him the while
With hate they dared not show, for still the Earl
Would never listen to their just complaints,
And many whispering spoke of something wrong:
The Earl grew care-worn, even strangers' eyes
Could read a tale of suffering, ill-conceal'd;
And many speaking of his failing health,
Said, that he brooded on his nephew's fate,
And others—these were chiefly of his friends—
Hinted suspicions of a darksome deed,
Done on a misty morning out at sea.
And so the Earl, finding himself avoided,
Doubted by his friends, suspected by his neighbours,
Lived a weary life: all his wealth
But bitter dust within the hollow fruit,
Of that dead-sea of trouble round his heart.

Then, ever taking counsel with himself,

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The Earl determin'd that the man must go ;
At any cost he felt the man must go,
For every day his insolence increased ;
Becoming patent, even to the minds
Of herd and plough-boy, that the man possess'd
Some secret influence of evil power.

At last the Earl resolved, and rising up
At earliest day-break from his restless couch,
Pass'd through the lonely wood, and reach'd the house,
Where dwelt the trouble of his blighted life.
"I come," he said to Will, with steady voice,
"To tell you that the burden I have borne,
Imposed on me by you, must be removed ;
I will not bear it more ; each village tongue,
With ceaseless tattle talks of something wrong,
Associating your vile name with mine ;
And everywhere I meet averted eyes ;
Nor do I wonder, even I myself,
Weakly submitting to your wicked will,
Feel, though all-innocent, a guilty man ;
I cannot bear it longer, it must cease

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From this time forth for ever; name a sum,
Enough to make you rich in other lands,
And go and rid me of this weary curse—
So undeserved—that undermines my life."
And Swarthy Will in silence gnaw'd his beard,
Considering awhile, and then replied—
"Were I a pauper, or an honest man,
I might be taken by your tempting bait;
But through your lordship's kindness, I can live
With every comfort in my native land;
Why should I change? It might be for the worse;
England is suited well for you and me,
The rich man and the rogue; the honest poor—
They are the people who must make the change,
To leave more room, my lord, for such as we:
And I intend to stay, I like my life
Here in this lonely wood, and still in reach
Of merry cities, and your lordship's purse."

And then the Earl, seeing no hope of ransom,
Went his way through the brown wood,
And pass'd with aching heart,

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The dewy meadows, murmuring as he went,
"Had I but been less weak! but now the time
Is spent for speaking of this villain's wiles;
By giving way at first I lost myself:
But this I swear! within this very month,
The earth shall hold me either dead or free:
The man must go, or he or I must die.
Why should I feel compunction? In old days
They strung such scoundrels to the nearest tree,
And left their bodies carrion for the crows;
But I, because the usages have changed,
Must bow subjection to this paltry knave—
I swear that I will bear such rule no more!
And yet I could not strike him down unarm'd,
And unprepar'd, all villain though he be;
No, I will bid him meet me, bring his gun,
I saw a roe-buck near the western wood—
And Will and I must have a morning's sport
All unattended; when I lure him there,
A grave shall yawn prepar'd for him or me;
And when we near it, I will raise my gun,
And give him warning twice before I fire,

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And should I fall, my troubles find an end;
And should I kill him, he shall rot unseen,
Beneath a winding-sheet of wither'd leaves."

Ten days elapsed, and Will still held his own,
With every insolence, in Abbot's wood;
When, from a lonely walk, the Earl return'd,
And took a letter from his servant's hand;
And feeling weary and all ill at ease,
Pass'd to his chamber, breaking there the seal;
And found the letter written by a man,
Who once had done him service when abroad—
A wealthy merchant—begging him to grant
The favour of his counsel and advice,
To one, who would arrive almost as soon
As his epistle: that a Spanish don
Having an only son—his future heir—
Wished him to visit England for a while,
To learn the customs of that favour'd land—
The youth would come supplied with ample means—
And would the Earl assist him at the first
With his great influence? that such kindness shown

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To his friend's son, would be as to himself:
And so the Earl, though murmuring to himself,
"Would he were coming at another time,"
Felt it impossible to refuse such boon,
To one, who had been generous and kind,
When he himself had been in want of aid;
And ringing for a servant, told the man
To have a suite of rooms at once prepar'd.

Two mornings afterwards the youth arrived
Whom the kind Earl with courtesy received,
And bade him welcome, and his guest replied,
With foreign accent, in the English tongue;
"All thanks, my lord, for tendering your roof
To me a wandering stranger. I have learnt—
Without long waiting—one good English trait,
A kindly greeting: I at first felt shame
At thus intruding, now I feel the shame
At having doubted, for I seem at home."
And then the Earl, liking the young man's manner,
Took his arm and led him to his rooms.
"I trust," he said, "that you will make it home

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While you remain. My guests are masters here,
And I, their willing servant: what you want,
You need but ask for—what you would do—do."

For several days the youth, an honour'd guest,
Had rested at the park, and noting oft
His host's abstracted look and troubled brow,
Although he ask'd no questions—tried to solve
The curious riddle, why the man who held
Such ample wealth and power, should ever seem
More full of trouble than the poorest hind,
That earn'd his scanty meals by daily toil?
And speaking to his host, he said, "Kind Earl,
I fear I trespass too much on your time;
I would not be a trouble, yet I see
Your mind is occupied with heavy cares;
And I, a stranger, take up many hours
Too precious to be wasted—let me leave,
With all my thanks for every kindness shown."
And then the Earl, replying in all haste,
"I pray you that you stay, and do not think
Your presence burdens me, for since you came,

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I have felt more happy than for many years ;
Come, let us walk, and whither shall we go ?"

" I often notice," said his smiling guest,
" That wondrous stretch of dun and level sand ;
The tide is now retiring, and the sea,
I know, will vanish to the dimmest line
On the horizon, ere its waves return ;
Shall we have time to reach that long flat isle,
That rises from the sand a shingly bank,
Cover'd with verdant turf, from whence the gulls
To every quarter seem to wing their way ?"
" No !" said the Earl, half-shuddering, " no ! not there,
I would not step upon its cursed shore
For all my earldom. There are other isles
Which we will visit on a future day ;
One that sustains a grand old ruin'd keep,
Another rises rocky from the sea,
On which embower'd by trees, still stand the stones,
That once had form'd a hermitage or church ;
Why do you choose from all that barren bank ?
Ah ! could you even dream of what occurr'd

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On that bleak island, you would shudder too;
My little nephew climbing in a boat—
Which I had moor'd securely, as I thought—
Was carried out to sea; the cruel tide
Bore him away—a dense sea-fog drove on
A night of wind and storm—and all we found
In early day-break was the broken boat,
To tell the tale of little Harold's fate.
But ask no more, I loved the gentle boy
As I had been his father; come with me,
And you shall read within our village church,
The dreadful details of my nephew's death."
Then walking on, they reach'd the time-worn church,
And passing through the porch, along the aisle—
Where many batter'd effigies of knights
Lay grim and stern mementos of the past—
Stopt where a lancet window all-aflame
With ruby radiance, on a marble slab
Threw tinted sun-beams; sculptur'd on the stone,
A bank of pebbles, and a rippling sea;
And on the sea, a boat, a child therein,
With hands extended as though asking aid.

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"This is in mem'ry," sadly said the Earl,
"Of him I lost upon that very isle
You wish'd to visit. From its barren bank
I saw him carried by the ebbing tide,
Having no power to save him. Now you know
My reason for refusing your request:
Here is the legend, read it if you will,
And I will wait your coming in the porch."

After a time the Spanish youth return'd,
And drawing near the Earl, said, "I have spelt
The mournful story, but I think myself,
That what seems evil happens oft for good;
The child you loved so might have turn'd out ill,
And brought but trouble with his ripening years."
And then the Earl replying, "That brave boy
Grow up to evil? No! you knew him not,
It was not in his nature, had he lived—
And he would now have reach'd perchance your years—
He would have brought me comfort, never grief."
"And had he lived, kind host," replied the youth,
"Where would have been your earldom?"

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And the Earl, half-angry, answering,
"I would freely give ten paltry earldoms
With their golden fees, to have him here beside me;
Say no more: although long years have pass'd
Since Harold perish'd, still my grief is fresh,
As though it happen'd only yesterday; and you my guest,
I pray be silent, for my heart is sore."

The youth kept silence for a little while,
Scanning the Earl with keen and watchful eyes—
Then speaking once again, "I fear, my lord,
That you are tired, or ill, your face is pale,
And I have led you with my heedless tongue,
To touch upon your troubles—you are faint,
But by good fortune I have brought my flask,
It may refresh you, tho' it but contain
A little water'd wine." Then holding out
The silver vessel, press'd it on the Earl.

The Earl declined, but noticing the flask,
Suddenly snatch'd it from the young man's hand;
And gazing at it, "By great Heaven!" he cried,

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"How came you by it, for this once was mine?
Here is my monogram engrav'd thereon—
The very flask—I swear the very flask
My nephew had beside him when the boat
Bore him away." "I had it from a sailor,"
Said the youth, "but you, my lord,
Are welcome to it if the flask be yours."

The Earl stood pondering, answering not a word,
His guest, in silence, fix'd upon his face
Attentive eyes, as though to read his soul.
Then speaking in low voice, "Would you, my lord,
Indeed rejoice to see the boy return?
Could you give up your earldom and its wealth,
To one, who now, so many years gone by,
Would almost seem an alien to your heart,
Without some slight regret, some after-thought,
This boy has robbed me of what once was mine?"
The Earl then interrupting, turned his eyes
Fiery and flashing full upon his guest;
"You know not what you say," he loudly cried,
"Or do you try to taunt me on my grief?

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What is an earldom to the boy I lost,
And what are riches to my peace of mind?
Vex me no more—but tell me all you know,
Of how, and where, and when, this flask was found."
And then the youth still smiling, said, "Kind Earl,
I read but truth and honour in your eyes—
Have patience with me, while I paint in words,
Some scenes, that come upon me like a dream,
Where lowering vapours mingle with the sun;
And interrupt me not with even a word,
Until I finish all I have to show.
First of all,
A bleak wild island, white with wings of birds
Hovering about it, dense as flakes of snow—
A glassy sea, on which there rides a boat,
Grating the shingle as the tide retires—
A wilful boy, unmindful of commands,
Creeping towards the boat, who climbs therein
And pulls a rope, and drifts away to sea—
A lessening island, and a struggling form,
Striving to reach the boat—then waving arms,
And two men battling on the barren isle,

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No bigger than the birds about the boat—
Then mist-like rain, and banks of murky clouds—
A setting sun tinting with ruddy rays
The heaving ocean—while a stately ship
Glides like a phantom, from the waning light
On the horizon, through a foaming sea—
A peopled deck, a little boy thereon,
The centre of the wondering gaze of all—
A boat deserted, tossing on the tide.
Now, uncle, do you know me? see you aught
In me of him you lost? and need I show
This jewell'd locket and the names therein
As vouchers for my truth? I tried you hard,
Dear uncle, how I tried you, but to prove
If any flaw exist within your heart;
And found it pure and clear, but had I seen
The slightest taint of greed, begot by gain
Of lands and titles, warring with the love
My boyish instinct taught me to respect,
Then, soon should I return to sunny Spain,
Where I am rich, and loved by kindest friends—
Friends who adopted me on board the ship,

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That drew me from the sea—to arms that clasp't
The shivering boy it saved, and call'd him son:
But now I claim the truest guardian nephew ever knew."
The Earl, half-sobbing, held him to his heart;
"My boy," he said, "you need not tell me more;
When first we met, I felt my heavy heart
Yearning towards you, as to some dear friend;
Now, every feature tells me you are he,
He, whom I mourn'd as lost, oh! welcome back—
Oh! doubly welcome—for you save my soul,
From that would make you shudder even to hear."
And then the uncle, taking Harold's arm,
Rose from the porch, and pass'd from out the tombs,
Across the meadows, hearing Harold's tale.

When Harold stood, half stupefied with fear,
Upon the deck, surrounded by the crew—
Who spoke strange words he could not understand—
(The vessel was a Spaniard bound for Spain)
One of the passengers, a rich old don—
And owner of the barque—came up the stairs
From out the cabin, follow'd by his wife;

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And staring in amazement, spoke some words
In broken English to the frighten'd boy;
Who only answer'd him with sobs and tears,
Ever demanding to be taken home.
Then, the old don, assisted by his wife—
Whose kindly gestures softened Harold's grief—
Carried the boy below, and warm'd some wine,
And changed his dripping clothes, and on a couch
Soothed him to sleep, and watch'd him as he lay
In peaceful slumber, all his sorrow pass'd.

Then, in the morning came the rising wind,
Increasing to a gale, and gave no chance
To send a boat to shore; and so the ship
Gaining deep water, kept away to sea.
For many days the furious tempest raged,
And little Harold, ill upon his couch,
Within the cabin, could not give a clue
To show them who he was; but murmur'd oft
About his uncle, and the sea-bird's isle:
Then the old couple, learning by degrees
The boy was orphan, both his parents dead,

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Felt that a chance—long wished for—had arrived,
To gain an heir, and bless'd the stormy sea
That cast this waif upon their childless hearts;
And when they landed, passing to Seville,
Convey'd him to their home, and bred him up
With generous nurture, as their son and heir.

For many years he lived a joyous life
With his new parents, and the boy began
To ripen into manhood, and his curious mind—
Often reflecting scenes of years gone by—
Would conjure up strange visions from the past,
In which a kind grave face would oft appear;
Sometimes a mansion, circled with wild woods,
And tracts of briny sands; and oftener still,
A barren island full of cries of birds,
And swooping wings, and in their midst a man
Frenzied with anguish—shouting from the shore.
And then remembrance, that repaints the past
With clearest colours, all our earliest years,
Would give the face a name, and he would ask,
"Who was that uncle whom I loved so well?"

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But noticing the pain his questions gave,
To those kind friends who used him as their son,
Refrain'd at length from speaking of the past.

It chanced one morning, wandering through a grove,
Begemm'd with silver flowers and golden fruit;
A straggling branch, entangling Harold's chain,
Broke it, and freed the locket there attach'd—
A golden bauble that he always wore,
Because when he was rescued from the boat,
That chain and locket had been round his neck—
And finding that the crystal case had crack'd—
That guarded two small locks of braided hair—
He moved it with his nail, and found below,
These English words engraved upon the gold—
"A father's birthday present to his boy,"—
And underneath the date, a titled name.

Then Harold, pondering, left the orange grove,
And hasten'd to the house, and show'd his friends
What he had seen; and they, communing long,
Talk'd low and earnestly between themselves;

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Consulting too their friends, and found at last,
One, who knew well the name engraved thereon.
Then—all enquiries made—the boy proposed
That they should introduce him to the man,
Who held the title, by his foreign name;
And they consenting, sent him on the quest,
Accompanied by a servant tried and true,
Preceded by a letter, from their friend,
To introduce him as a Spanish youth
Visiting England, on a foreign tour.
Then having sadly pack'd the silver flask
They found beside him, and the golden gift,
They bade the youth adieu, and made him vow
To write and tell them all that might occur;
And never to forget, a home in Spain
Awaited him mistaken or ill-judged.
So Harold left them, weighing in his mind
The love he left behind, against the face,
The kindly face that haunted all his dreams.

Then, Harold's uncle spoke of Swarthy Will;
Telling his nephew, how the man presumed

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Upon the weakness he had shown at first
In granting his demands, and how the wretch
Had made his life a burden, and the youth—
They both were entering the stable-yard
Behind the mansion—"Give me leave, kind host,
To cleanse the Abbot's wood from this foul fox,
Whose cunning wiles have wrought you so much ill;
Remember you your words, when first I came,
A wandering stranger? I do not forget—
'My guests are masters, what you would do—do.'
And so I pray you that you give command,
To every man and boy about the house,
That they obey me, as yourself, to-day!"

The laughing Earl, consenting, ordered all
To follow Harold's wishes, and the men
Gather'd around them, gaping with amaze:
Then Harold bade them arm themselves with whips,
"And choose the stoutest," said he, "you can find,
And follow me with all the speed you may—
We go to hunt a fox from Abbot's wood!"
They understanding soon, a jovial cheer

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Rang from each lusty throat, and having seized
On hunting-crops, and whips, and beater's staves,
Sped after Harold swiftly down the drive;
While the old huntsman, brandishing his horn,
Brought up the rear, and shouting to the Earl,
"Wait on the terrace, you shall have a note
When he breaks cover," followed up the rest.

And soon they reach'd the wood, and in the house,
Found Swarthy Will just rising from his bed;
Savage with drink, and wondering at the din
He heard around him. Then, with blood-shot eyes,
He dash'd upon them; but they cast him down
Despite his giant strength, and held him fast,
Awaiting Harold's orders; while the brute
Pour'd oaths upon them from his foaming lips,
Boasting of power he held upon their lord:
Then Harold, flushing with the rage he felt,
Advanc'd towards him—"Cowardly knave," he cried,
"The paltry power you vaunt, is past and gone,
The web is broken, that you vilely wove
Around the truest heart that ever beat;

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For I stand here, a witness to its truth—
The boy the ocean spared that misty morn—
To thrust your slanders down your lying throat;
And that my scorn restrains my eager arm,
I, even I, your Earl, would lash you forth,
To reap the justice that your deeds deserve;
But loose him, friends, a true man's honest hand
Is tainted with the touch of such as he."

So they, unwilling, let the rascal free;
But he, up-springing like a rabid dog,
Flew straight at Harold, when he gain'd his feet,
And almost reach'd him, but a dozen blows
Raining upon him, beat the scoundrel back;
And then, with one wild yell, he reach'd the door,
And darted forth, belabour'd with the strokes
Dealt on his writhing carcass, as they all
Join'd in the chase, and many a "view-halloo,"
And "gone-away," rose ringing through the wood;
While the old huntsman, finding breath at last,
Blew out one lusty blast upon his horn—
Then stood, and shook his sides, and laughing swore

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He never yet had seen a better burst,
And only wish'd that he had brought his mare,
To see the finish of the rascal's run.

So Swarthy Will departed, like a puff
Of noxious vapour, vanquish'd by pure air.
And Harold's uncle, happy in the loss
Of lands and titles, so that slander slept,
Proved ever trustiest guardian to his ward:
And never guest was warmer welcomed yet,
Than when the kind old don arrived from Spain,
To visit Harold, who was still his heir.

Thus, sorrow and misgiving passed away;
And only once, a fleeting shadow cross'd
The sunny face that Harold found so true,
When the new keeper came one wintry morn,
To tell how he had found a curious pit,
Narrow and long, dug in a lonely dell,
While he was trapping in the Western wood;
And in the pit, all full of mouldering leaves,
A rusty spade, and searching further still,

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A massive golden ring—which he produced—
On it engraved, the emblazoning of the house ;
And many wondering, said that Swarthy Will
Had dug the pit to hide his ill-earn'd gains ;
And others shuddering, thought it like a grave
Prepared for some foul deed, by that dark man
Now driven from the country ; while, not one,
Guess'd what there might have been beneath the
leaves.

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THE BOOK OF TRUTH.

THE air was sultry, and the lurid sky,
Dense with dark clouds, was quivering in the glare
Of constant lightning—and the rolling crash
Of thunder never ceased—and all the earth
Trembled and shook beneath the awful roar
Of Heaven's artillery.
The bright sulphureous streams
Flash'd full upon a livid face that lay
Upon a couch, within a lofty room
Resounding with the storm—a face so white,
So still, so ghastly, that on entering there,
No one would say but he beheld a corpse.
Upon the floor, a trickling stream of blood
Oozed from the naked arm that lay outstretch'd
Upon the silken cover of the couch,
And all ensanguin'd too, a surgeon's bandage,
Recently removed. Then the door open'd,

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And with cautious step, a girl with frighten'd face
Drew near the death-like form—then,
Uttering shriek on shriek, fled from the room,
Arousing all the house—and servants came,
And bore the pallid man who lay so still,
Swooning to death, within an inner room:
And then his brothers came about his bed,
(One a young surgeon) and replaced the lint,
And closed the gaping vein, and he revived;
But all the time he lay there—night and day—
His sister, she who found him on the couch,
So nigh to death, stirred scarcely from his side,
But kept a silent ever-anxious guard.

Raymond Lamorier—whom his sister watch'd
Till his recovery—eldest of three sons,
Had been from boyhood different in his ways
From other schoolboys, but as years advanced,
His eccentricities increased ten-fold.
Reserved and silent, he would seldom speak
On mundane topics, but to scoff and sneer,
And say that men were idiots and fools,

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Who brought all ills and troubles on themselves—
Becoming civilised. In everything beside,
He disagreed with others—broke all rules
Framed for society—and at last,
Shutting himself within a suite of rooms,
Where no one but his sister ever passed,
Busied himself above his furnace fire,
And musty books, and strange old manuscripts.
His father ever let him have his will,
But the two brothers, jealous of the man,
(They were the children of a second wife)
Tried to displace him from his father's heart,
By hinting ever at his wild mad ways;
And so his father, anxious but for peace,
Gave up a suite of rooms for Raymond's use.

That morning of the storm, when all the sky
Gather'd its battle clouds in dread array,
Raymond's half-brothers, Alaric and Grey,
Roaming about the house, had found the door
Of Raymond's rooms unfasten'd; entering in,
With wilfulness and spite—finding him absent—

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They destroy'd his books, broke his alembics,
And were passing out, when they saw Raymond
Standing at the door; his eyes were blazing
With his furious rage. Then they laugh'd
And taunted him with jests, and Raymond sprang—
In one of those wild passions that change men
To rabid beasts—fiercely across the room;
Oft had they goaded him to angry moods,
Approaching madness, but his rage that day
Exceeded all that they had seen before;
As taking up a heavy loaded stick,
He rush'd towards them—"I could kill you both,"
He cried, "for all the malice you have shown,
Destroying half the labours of my life."
But the two brothers, active stalwart men,
Closed quickly with him, bore him to the ground,
And bound him. Then the elder, Alaric, said,
"Make bare his arm, and I will let him blood.
Our father being absent, we have right,
To do the best we can for this mad fool,
Who never bears a jest; but we will see
If drawing out some hot blood from his heart,

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Will cool his head ;" and then they lock'd the door,
Gagg'd him, and laid him bound upon the couch.
Then Alaric oped a vein, and let the stream
Of life pour forth, and took much blood away ;
Then turning to the other, said, "Enough,
I dare not bleed him more ;" and Raymond lay
All-fainting on the couch, as Alaric bound
Some lint upon the wound and stanch'd the blood ;
They then removed the gag and freed his limbs—
Languid to death—and quickly left the room ;
While Alaric whispering, said, "I almost fear
That we have gone too far—happen what may—
We did it for the best." And Grey replied,
"I would have let the madman all his blood,
Had I my will ;" he stopp'd, and turn'd again,
And entering the room where Raymond lay—
Helpless and speechless—with most cruel hand,
Removed the bandage and re-oped the vein,
And join'd his brother with a stealthy step,
Saying, " He must himself have moved his arm,
And loosed the bandage," and they both retired,
Amid an echoing crash of heavenly wrath.

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It happen'd that their little sister heard
Their mutter'd words, and fearing something ill,
Crept quietly away to Raymond's rooms,
And saw the ghastly sight upon the couch,
And saved his life.
Since her mother's death,
The little girl had taken much to Raymond,
He to her—the only living being in the world,
For whom he show'd affection—and the girl,
From very childhood, loved the moody man;
Would sit beside him, and with curious eyes,
Watch his experiments; waiting but the chance
To be of service should he ask her aid:
And he would call her his familiar sprite,
Who brought success to all he undertook.

The father, greatly grieved, when he return'd,
At all he heard; for Alaric and Grey,
Meeting him first, wove a most artful tale
Of Raymond's madness, and the gentle means
They used to cool the pressure on his brain;
But how their brother, whom they left, they thought,

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Tranquil and calm, had torn the lancet's wound
In frenzied madness, while they were away,
And would have drain'd himself of all his life,
Had not their sister, passing near his room,
And entering there, found him upon the couch
Bleeding to death; they, hearing screams for help,
Had gone at once and remedied the ill.

The old man learning this, and fearing much,
Proceeded straightway to his first-born's room;
And found him calmly busy with his books,
With little Ella seated by his side. Then he spoke gently,
Begging him to tell all that had happen'd;
But Raymond scarce replied; so the old man,
Turning to Ella, asked her what she knew;
But Ella, looking straight in Raymond's eyes,
Knew nothing, but that entering the room,
She found her brother—dead as she supposed;
And crying out for aid, her brothers came
And bound his arm, and brought him back to life;
But nothing said she of her weary watch.

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Time pass'd, and Raymond, gaining back his strength,
Lived his old life within his quiet rooms,
Still more abstemious even than before,
For flesh or wine now never passed his lips;
Although his sister, fearing for his health,
Would press them on him—"No," he ever said,
"I have a demon I must overcome
By fastings, and denials; flesh and wine
Sustain him, weaken me—but give me milk,
And fruit, and herbs, and I grow strong;"
And from that time his passion pass'd away:
His brothers he avoided, as they him,
And his old father, humouring his moods,
Inquired no more about his strange mishap.
So Raymond, with his books, lived all content,
Healthy as well, but from that stormy morning,
When his soul so nearly pass'd away,
The colour never tinged his flesh again;
His full dark eyes grew larger and more bright,
But all his face was bloodless, and he seem'd
As one who had arisen from the tomb.

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Thus, Raymond lived at peace for several years:
His brothers, finding all their plans had fail'd
To set the old man's heart against his son,
Forbore their treacherous schemes, except that they
Continued still to speak, in pitying tones,
To all their friends of Raymond's strange mad ways;
But when the old man, dying, left a will,
Bequeathing more to Raymond than themselves,
(They had inherited their mother's wealth)
Then all their evil feelings found a vent,
Hating him with the cruel bitter hate
That near relations when at variance feel—
More to be dreaded than a foreign feud—
So they matured their plans, and one dark night
Bore him away from home, and hired two men
To keep and guard him in a lonely house—
A dangerous madman who must be controll'd.

At first his passion, when he knew his fate,
Induced the men—who had some doubts before—
To think the brothers only spoke the truth,
And then they treated him more harshly still;

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And Raymond, losing everything he loved—
All his resources gone—driven to bay—
Turn'd on his keepers well-nigh mad indeed,
And so they lock'd him in a little room
With grated window, gave him food
At stated periods, and soon brought their minds—
Well salved with gold before—to deem him mad.

Then Raymond growing calmer search'd his room,
Hoping to find some means to gain escape,
And in a little cupboard, on a shelf—
All thick with dust of years—he found a book,
The book, a Bible, and he brought it down,
And read some pages he had never read,
And studied them ; and so for several months
He found employment, making many notes,
And ever musing, murmur'd " Is it good ?"

His anxious sister—sorrowing for his loss—
After great search had found a clue at last,
And with the man she loved (who gave his aid,
Because she vow'd she would not be his bride,

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Till he should free her brother from his foes,)
Arm'd with the law, enter'd the lonely house,
Found Raymond's room, and bursting down the door,
(His guards had vanish'd fearing something wrong,)
Soon claspt her brother to her loving heart,
And led him from his prison.
Then commenced
A suit at law, and after strict inquiry,
All declared the brothers' conduct wrong
And Raymond sane—"He might have been eccentric"
Summ'd the judge, "in many of his habits,
What of that? If men might be abused
For differing in opinions and in dress
From certain notions—who would then be safe?
As for the plaintiff, he had spoken well;
He thought the madness on the other side,
If crime be madness." So, their guilt exposed,
The two vile brothers fled to other lands,
Fearing the judgment hovering o'er their heads,
And Raymond gain'd his cause, but in the place
Where he had suffered, feeling ill at ease,
To his kind sister, as a wedding gift,

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Made over house and land, and then retired,
Not from the haunts of men, but to the heart
Of London's busy city, judging well,
That where men throng the thickest, there would be
More rest from scandal and from curious eyes,
Than in the village, where each gossip's tongue
Is ever busy for his neighbour's deeds.

There, where the stream of traffic murmur'd by
A quaint old yard, he bought himself a house—
Mouldering with age—that once had been a store—
Well suited for each purpose of his mind:
And there, with one old man, whom he retain'd
As scientific drudge, he placed his books,
His furnace and his retorts, and became
A very Crusoe 'midst the sea of life
That ebb'd and flow'd around him—there he lived
Contented, and the neighbours near
Troubled their heads but little for the man,
Who took no interest in trade or gain;
Though Raymond's face and strange fantastic garb
Would startle those who sometimes came to speak

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On business to his rooms :—his bloodless cheeks—
His sunken glittering eyes—his shaggy beard,
And velvet robe, o'er which was often thrown,
In careless negligence, a leopard's skin—
Made him appear a being of the past: then his rooms
Full of strange instruments, and ancient scrolls,
And curious drugs, and bones, and ghastly forms,
That seem'd to leer from out their crystal tombs
On all around them ; lighten'd by the glare—
The windows all were barr'd and boarded up—
That flicker'd faintly from the furnace fire.
His rooms could but be entered from the floor,
Where yawn'd a trap, a ladder underneath,
And all the vacant floor was thickly scored,
With strange devices and mysterious signs ;
And any entering suddenly the room,
Might well imagine, noting Raymond's form,
With hair and beard all tangled on his robe,
That he beheld some wizard in his den.

But few, however, gain'd admission there,
The outer door was ever lock'd and barr'd,

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And seldom open'd, but to two or three,
Whom Raymond knew would leave him undisturb'd;
There he would work by night as well as day,
Keeping no stated hours, but ever press'd
To follow up the clue, which he believed
At last he held to that grand secret
Which would keep life's fire renew'd for ever.

And many arts he wrested from the past,
In hours of leisure from his heavier toil;
How to paint as Rubens or Vandyke,
And how to cast the golden gloom of Rembrandt,
Or with cunning brush, make all his canvass
Silvery with the greys that shine in pearls;
Or reproduce old blue-green backgrounds,
And when artists came to wonder as they gazed upon
his work,
Raymond would smile, and call them simple fools,
Who knew not even their craft, and taking up
A panel, would prepare it in the room;
Showing them how the cracks like those we see
In finest porcelain, were not in the paint,

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But in the preparation, not attain'd by age,
But in the watery film on which the paint
Was thinly spread; telling them how to purge
Their earths from all impurity and oil
By mere absorption; leaving pure and bright
The colour on the surface, all the oil beneath;
Different to paintings of the modern school, so bright
at first,
So soon to perish from the great excess
Of loaded grease-foul paint, but work to live
From century to century, pure as those
That left old Titian's umber-tinted hands.

And many other curious facts he learnt,
With ceaseless study, and untiring will;
But little thought he of them—they, to him,
Were trivial matters filling idle hours,
While some decoction mellow'd in the sun,
Or some strange substance, gradually dissolved
In biting acid, rose in pungent fumes
To take a part in that grand work of all,
The secret that should make him more than man.

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And oftentimes his sister Ella came,
And with her husband watch'd him as he work'd;
And he was ever happy as she sat
Close by his side, assisting him the while,
As when she was a curious little child;
But with her husband ever ill at ease—
He always chided Raymond's wasted time
On such illusion—often turn'd away
Morose and moody, deigning no reply.

One morning Ella's husband came alone
To see how Raymond fared. A clergyman—
The good man troubled much at Raymond's life;
So entering the room, with serious face,
He broach'd the subject that was near his heart.

"Why, Raymond, do you waste so many hours
On this false dream—for dream it surely is—
From which you will awake with aching heart,
To mourn your time and talents thrown away
On what is visionary; while the real world,
With all its wonders, stretches round these walls:

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Why do you isolate yourself from all mankind,
Striving in vain to overturn the rule
That He has set us?—Even though you succeed—
But that will never be—in this strange scheme,
Would you confer a boon upon our race,
Or would it be a scourge, a work of good,
Or deepest wrong? Come, cast away these drugs
And evil potions—dress as other men,
And mingle with them more, and you will find
This morbid fancy soon will fly your brain:
I own your knowledge, but extremes do meet,
And wise men often are akin to fools,
Being too wise: there is a boundary set,
Once reach it, and our vaunted wisdom falls,
Lost in the gaping chasm God has set."

Then Raymond, turning round his bloodless face,
Spoke in his turn, calmly and gently,
But his flashing eyes show'd the excitement
Burning in his brain—fire, that in former years,
Might perhaps have found a vent in angry words.
"You, being a parson, preach no doubt the truth

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As most men see it : men whose sires were train'd
By torture and by fire, in days of yore,
To take as gospel all that priests profess ;
And though the faggot and the cruel flames,
Time has extinguish'd ; smouldering embers lurk
In many churches, through which they must pass,
Who do not follow strictly in your rules,
By that straight path society demands,
Because you threaten us with pains of Hell—
A dread eternity of bitter grief—a cruel God
Whose anger burns against his erring sons
For ever—let us but come to you,
And go through certain forms, and pay you well,
O hypocrites and fools, and we are saved !
You think me mad because I would prolong,
If possible, man's life ? no doubt you blame,
For it would spoil, perchance, the parson's trade
Should I succeed. Now, husband of my Ella, list to me,
Leave me this leopard's skin I love to wear,
And keep your vestments, if you think them good ;
Preach the truth, nor care too much for outward signs
and forms ;

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Make your church more refuge for the ignorant and poor,
Than house of entertainment for the rich;
Be not luke-warm, and split no trivial straws
With any other sect—if you believe
One sacred mystery, you may trust in all:
But disunited houses cannot stand,
And you are all disputing 'mongst yourselves,
And perhaps may wake some day, with aching hearts,
To mourn the talents you have thrown away,
On visionary schemes for honouring Him
Whose name ye but dishonour by your feuds.
In many an earnest hour of deepest thought,
I strove to judge between the right and wrong,
Sins of commission, and omission both—
I sometimes think the latter are the worse—
And I believe, as night is to the day,
So necessary too, is ill to good:
Nothing is good but by comparison,
And nothing wholly bad, for God's wise will
Ever doth mingle shadow with the sun:
Why do you try to overturn his rule,
By making all men—to your standard—good?

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And even though you succeed, would you confer
A boon upon our race, or some vast ill?
Had we bright sunshine ever on our earth,
Should we not sometimes sorrow for the shade?
Had we not battles where would be our peace?
Could we feel pleasure, had we not known pain?
Yet pleasure in excess is kin to pain,
Then where the line between the false and true?
But I have no more time to waste in words,
A day may come, when you shall see the truth—
Not only see—but also understand;
The page would now be blank before your mind;
But I by frequent fasts, and loss of blood,
Have read some secrets with a spirit's eyes,
And on those vellum leaves with curious inks,
Have written much experience; and the book—
Because I only write the facts I prove—
I call The Book of Truth, but pass it by!
The truth would not be savoury to the age."
Then, Ella's husband, by the narrow steps,
Left Raymond's rooms, and speaking with his wife
Later that morning, gravely shook his head,

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And said her brother's words were very wild;
He fear'd that solitude, and studious life,
Had driven him really mad. So she the more
Visited Raymond, and by gentlest means,
Did all she could to wean him from his thoughts;
For he was only tractable with her.

One morning, summon'd in the early light,
She hurried to his house—her husband too—
For Raymond's servant came, with anxious face,
To beg their presence; for he fear'd, he said,
Much was amiss. They, entering the house,
Found all in silence. Then the old man told
How Raymond, wearied with a long day's work,
Had sought his chamber, saying, he must rest;
But had not yet awaken'd from his sleep,
Nor could he rouse him, though for full twelve hours,
Had he, against his habits, slumbered there.
They, opening the door, approach'd the bed;
And Ella, speaking softly, touch'd his hand,
Started, and cried—"Oh! husband, he is dead!"
Then came a doctor, who pronounced that life

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Had left his body several hours ago;
His limbs were rigid, and his breath had flown.

Some days elapsed, and Raymond's form was placed
Within his coffin; and the men had come
To close him up for ever from the world,
When Ella, weeping, begg'd for one last look
At him, who, though a cynic to his kind,
Had ever been a gentle friend to her;
And pressing on his brow, pallid and cold,
(But not more pale than when he was in life)
One gentle kiss, arranged upon his breast
Some simple flowers, and touch'd, by merest chance,
The shroud above the region of his heart;
And there she felt—or fancied that she felt—
Some lingering warmth: her husband, most surprised,
Declared the same, and order'd that the lid
Should not be fasten'd. Then the doctor came,
And said the case was strange, and then he pour'd
Some strong restoratives on Raymond's lips,
But all without avail, for still he lay
Rigid in death.

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They watch'd him day and night,
When as their hopes had almost passed away,
One evening, sitting in the lamp-lit room,
They heard a rustling sound about the bed
Where Raymond lay; and Ella starting up,
Saw something move, and passing to the bed,
Found Raymond's eyes were open; but their light
Was wild and vacant, yet he knew her too,
And tried to speak, but had not yet the power.

Then, with all care she nursed him, till he stood
Again among them, rescued from the grave:
But little said they to him of the trance,
So nearly fatal, into which he fell,
And Raymond, too, kept silence; till one day
His sister came alone, and Raymond, then,
Sending his servant to another room,
Said, "You have saved my life a second time:
Should death again assail me I am lost,
Unless I win the secret of all life;
But hope and courage sometimes fail me now,
And I must tell you, that should I succumb

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Beneath death's dart, a sure and certain sign
To prove me vanquish'd ; for extremes do meet,
And the excess that I may gain of life,
Might first appear as death ; now take my hand,
And hold it close before this brilliant light,
The flesh is all transparent as you see,
And while it be so, to the least degree,
Life will remain ; now take this leaden weight,
And hold it closely as you did my hand ;
No light shines through it, all appears opaque :
Such is the human hand when life hath fled,
And when my flesh be dull, and dark as this,
Then you may bury me, without a fear,
That I should wake to life within my grave ;
For what would be my fate ! eternal life,
Thought, feeling, immortality compress'd
Within the narrow limits of the tomb.

" For when I lay so death-like in that trance,
I saw strange shadows of the time to be :
A stupor came upon me, and my limbs
Grew nerveless, and except for power

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Of sight, and hearing, all my senses pass'd.

"Then I saw over me a cloud of light—
A film of vapour—issuing from my mouth,
And saw myself embodied in the film,
And on the bed, a form of moulded clay;
And to the clay, a slender tremulous line—
No thicker than the thread that spiders spin—
Was still attach'd; and still I floated on,
And still the thread extended as I flew
Swifter, and swifter, through the void of space;
And all our earth appear'd a little star,
And other stars increased to ponderous worlds,
And then diminish'd into specks of light;
While all the distance gleam'd with other worlds,
World without end, as far as eye could see;
And then approaching a gigantic orb,
More vast by far than any I had seen,
Glowing with colours that we know not here;
I felt myself attracted by a power
That drew me to it, swifter than the thought,
And when I reach'd it, monstrous forms appear'd;

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Mountains of foliate metals—all intense
With radiating heat, and wondrous light—
And rolling, crimson, incalescent seas,
Like molten jewels, and upon their shores
Gigantic columns, spreading into boughs
A thousand feet above; and on their leaves,
A hundred blazing suns of various hues
Poured down incessant fire, and all the air
Was full of voices, and I saw fell forms—
Such as we see not in our direst dreams—
Struggling around me in the ruby light;
And all the phantoms fought among themselves,
And ever drove the weaker to the ground,
And all were waiting for a future state,
And all were worshipping an unknown God.

"Again my soul grew light, and floated on
Past world and world, until the monstrous orb
Appear'd a speck, receding from my sight,
And still all space was glimmering with clouds
Of shining dust, that grew again to stars,
And rolling planets, and not two alike;

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And some were glowing masses, crusted o'er
With cinderous lava, breaking into flames,
And others gleam'd all desolate with ice,
And others bursting fell around in space,
Or re-uniting, re-created worlds.
Again an unknown power drew on my soul—
A mild soft light beam'd round me, like the gleam
From rippling waters, when the moon is low;
And straight before me sailed a globe of light
Transparent to its core—by far more vast
Than even the giant orb of liquid fire:
All its exterior was smooth as glass—
In colour like an opal—but within,
Led curious passages and winding clefts;
And all was softened light such as is seen
Within the icy caverns of the Alps;
And myriad misty forms were struggling through
The sapphire chasms, and their voices rang
Like distant music mellowed by a dream;
And from their faces emanated rays
Like rosy star-light, and I pass'd within:
No wind or tempest pierced its crystal crust,

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But all was rest, and everlasting calm
Beneath the silent shelter of its domes.
And yet, among the fairest forms, I saw
Some forms more lucid, and they seem'd to try
Ever to guide the others through the rifts,
That led around them, into open space;
And many climbing fell, and they who reach'd
The outer surface, vanished into air:
But still the brighter forms would urge them on,
And they were all at variance with themselves,
And each one pointed out the only rift
To climb in safety—though not one returned
To prove its safety—and they one and all
Worshipp'd an unknown God, and all in awe
Trembled, and waited for the life to come.

"Again I floated through the purple space—
Where countless planets pulsed around their suns,
And vagrant comets, hissing on their course,
Pass'd, in their order, through the peopled worlds—
Until I reached an orb so huge and bright,
That every planet paled before the gleams

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That quivered from it: all its glorious plains
Were bright with beauties, such as human mind
Could not imagine, human tongue describe.
And countless races roamed about its plains,
And all were different, yet they all were one;
And every being had the god-like power,
Of ordering all things ever to its will,
Within the limits of their glorious realm;
And all their wills, though various, worked a whole
Harmonious to the happiness of each,
And every instant everything was changed
To something lovelier, growing still more bright,
Until the eye droop'd dazzled with the gleams
Of growing beauties, and my wandering soul,
Floating among them, felt that God was gain'd.

"Then all their voices, blending in one tone
Of rolling thunder, echoed on my ear:
'Return thou to the world from whence thou cam'st,
Poor soul still tethered to the carnal clay;
That seekest God as centre of all space—
Where is the centre where there be no end!

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We, who are gathered here from many worlds,
Still seek for God, and worship the Unknown,
The Universal, and we feel His power,
And bow before Him, but we know Him not:
And we were once at warfare with ourselves,
And strove to raise the veil that He had cast
About His presence, and our world grew dim—
For every creature held a different creed,
Confusing each, and all our peace was past—
And now we wait but for the time to be:
Go, seek again thy earth, poor troubled soul,
For wander on through space from age to age,
Though thou may'st meet with vaster worlds than ours,
And wiser beings, still wilt not perceive
The self-creating, omnipresent God;
Yet in each blade of grass, or drop of dew,
There He exists, had we the eyes to see
Power of creation—He is in your world,
As in our planet, or the vaster orbs
That roll through all immensity around—
For all existence owns His mighty power,
And nothing perishes that once hath been,

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But passing ever through the gates of death,
Awakes again to live, again to die,
For death is but renewal of the fire,
That feeds the furnace of Eternity.'

"And then the slender line that held my soul,
Again contracting, drew me back to earth—
A moment senseless—and again I woke,
To see you, Ella, hurrying to my side."

At last, his sister, gazing in his eyes,
Said, "This strange vision and unearthly dream
Should teach you wisdom, Raymond. This to me
Appears a warning, ordering you to cease
From your most vain and impotent attempt,
To read the secrets of eternal life,
Being but mortal—banish such a scheme
Far from your thoughts, and give your time and mind
To something tangible; for I for one—
And there are many who would choose with me—
Would rather live my little lotted span,
Than linger here, existing through all time;

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Such would seem to me as terrible a fate
As that you dreaded—waking up to life
Within the narrow boundaries of a tomb—
Although the tomb comprise our massive world :
No, brother, pass it by, and let such thought
Burst like a fragile bubble into air,
Or I, with others, must but deem you mad."

Then Raymond, answering, " Ella, I myself
Tremble sometimes at what I would attain ;
And yet the chymist's simplest secrets show
Increasing marvels, proving vital force
Can be renewed, and rescued from decay,
For some short periods—if renewed at all,
Why not for ever ? Even galvanic power,
That startles staring corpses from their shrouds,
Has its brief influence—but I, at last,
Have drawn some essences of such strange strength,
That once combined in one ethereal whole,
Shall feed the fragile fibres of our frame
Fast as life's fire consumes them, while the flame,
Ever supplied, will never waste or die ;

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And I, my sister—do not deem me mad—
Have all but work'd this wondrous problem out,
And I will first essay it on myself,
And then apply it to the one I love,
And we shall be as gods among mankind:
But should I fail, I know my certain fate—
For life and death are very near akin—
But should I prove successful, then I say
That I confer no boon upon our race,
Nor yet a scourge, for I will share my power
With no one, Ella, but with you alone.
For were we all in power, our world would grow
Like to the fiery hell of that dread dream,
Full of fell fiends at battle with themselves—"
"Or like the second planet;" Ella cried,
"Where we should be as those misguiding forms—
And still at variance—leading others on
To climb and fall, or vanish into air;
Better by far take warning from that orb
Teeming with knowledge, but which drove you back,
A mortal to the world, from whence you came,
To wait for death to lead you into life;

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For though you vainly strive to ape God's power,
By forming phantoms for all time to be,
You shudder even now, at what you dare."

Then Raymond turning from her, placed his hand
Upon the vellum book, all interlined
With margin'd notes in various coloured inks—
"I may, or may not," said he, "test the power
Of that most potent drug that I have brew'd;
But should I try it, and if I should fail—
I, who have risen twice from death's cold clutch,
Shall never rise a third time from his grasp:
Two spectre worlds I visited, and lived,
The third orb drove me back—perchance to die—
And should I perish, Ella, claim this book—
A life's experience lurks within its leaves—
And do not fear to take it at my death,
For nothing there is written but the truth,
Proved by the workings of my weary brain;
For though I know, myself, the wildest dreams
Mortal imagination conjures up,
Are but the shadowy memories of the past

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Reflected in the mirror of our minds;
Still have been guarded but that truth itself—
Facts I have proved—are but enletter'd there.
Now leave me, Ella, nor return again,
Until seven days from now have pass'd away:
I would be left to solitude and thought."

Those weary days roll'd on with leaden wings,
Until the time accomplish'd, that was named,
Ella betook herself with anxious heart
To Raymond's dwelling. Waiting in the street
She found his servant, who had had command
Not to disturb him or approach his room
Till he should ring, or should his sister come.
And then they enter'd by the narrow gate,
Climb'd the steep steps, and reach'd the gloomy room
Where Raymond studied; knocking at the door,
And hearing no reply, Ella, in some dismay
Push'd back the spring, and found the trap, though closed,
Had not been bolted, and then entering in,
Almost fell back before the noxious fumes

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That filled the chamber: everything within
Was veil'd in vapour, and phosphoric light
Shimmer'd around them, and they could not speak,
For some strange odour seized upon their breath.

Then the room clearing somewhat, by the air
Admitted to it from the open door,
Again they enter'd, and upon his chair
Saw Raymond seated, but his head was bow'd
Upon the table, and beside his chair,
A crystal flask lay shatter'd on the floor;
And near it lay his book, and all was drench'd
In some strange liquid, that emitted gleams
Like distant lightning when a storm has pass'd:
Then both cried to him, but he answer'd not,
And the white face they rais'd, again fell back
Upon the table, on his outstretch'd arms.
So Raymond passed away: he had essay'd
The wondrous potion, and had found, perchance,
The gate to life eternal, through the tomb.

For many days they watch'd his wasted form—

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Wasted by fastings—trying every test,
But fail'd to find the faintest spark of life
Remaining in him; still they watch'd and hoped,
Nor, till corruption claim'd him for its own,
Did they consign his body to the earth.
And Ella mourn'd her brother many days,
And though she saved the book, had not had heart
To look within it, till her husband ask'd,
One eve as they were sitting by the fire,
"Where is that book, my Ella, Raymond left?
For he was wise indeed in many arts,
And but for one mad fancy, might have been
A very man of men, among us now.
Where is the book?" And Ella left the room,
And passing to her chamber, raised the lid
Of an old oaken chest, where she had lock'd
Raymond's life labours; and with reverent hands,
Bearing the volume to her husband's side,
Unclasp'd the covers that conceal'd the Truth;
But with amazement found each page was blank,
Or blurr'd with colours, where the inks had run,
And all the wisdom that was writ therein—

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Drench'd with the deadly potion he had brew'd—
Was lost for ever : yet on sundry leaves
Still shone some letters penn'd in purest gold,
That had resisted even the poison's power ;
Where they who read could trace alone the words
Of Life, and Death—Infinity, and God.

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ORDEAL BY FIRE.

A STRAGGLING street, all white with chalky dust—
A score of houses clustering round a hill
Where stood a remnant of a ruin'd keep—
A church with walls of flint, and leaden spire—
Composed the village, where in rival state
Rose two tall houses; one, a red-brick hall,
Toned softly down by time, the squire's abode;
The other, lately built and bare of trees,
Staring and white with paint, and plaster'd sand,
The miller's mansion, close beside his mill.

For many years a bitter feud had raged
Between the two—the miller and the squire—
Their grounds adjoin'd, and at their gardens' end,
There stood a little space of vacant ground;
And in its midst an antique wood-fram'd well,

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Fringed down, almost as far as eye could see,
With giant fronds of ferns and verdant moss.

This well for long had been the quiet cause
Of bickerings and strife, between the two;
For when the miller bought the plot of ground,
(His longer purse at last outbid the squire's)
And built the vulgar dwelling by the mill,
He also claim'd the right to use the well;
This, the squire, angry when he lost the land,
Stoutly denied, and had the well forthwith
Strongly secured with padlock, bolt, and bar;
But these the miller broke, and then commenc'd
Incessant warfare, ending in the law,
And there it rested, ending not at all,
A cause of ceaseless trouble to them both.
At length, in course of time, the miller died,
And the old squire—still constant to his feud—
Follow'd his foeman to another world;
Each, too, had left behind, an only son,
Young Ernest Maxwell—offspring of the squire—
And Amos Thorne—the miller's wealthy heir.

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Of course the ancient suit about the well,
Descended, as an heir-loom, to them both;
And neither knew the other, save by sight,
Till one hot morning, when the scorching sun
Was painting all the peaches on the wall,
And with their perfume all the air was faint;
Young Ernest, stretch'd beneath a cedar's shade,
Lay in his garden, watching, half-asleep,
A gorgeous butterfly perch'd on a flower,
Sunning its wings of sable, barr'd with white
And brightest scarlet—drunk with nectar's sweets—
When, as it rose to fan its heavy plumes,
A grey-wing'd bird, down-darting from the tree,
Seized it, and bore it off within its bill.
Just at that instant Ernest heard a step,
And by the wicket-gate beside the well,
Saw Amos Thorne; a moment, and he rose,
Advanced towards him, and the two young men—
Hereditary foes—stood face to face.
They both were handsome in their different styles—
Manhood's soft down just darkening on their cheeks—
While Ernest's open brow and clear brave eyes,

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Speaking descent from gallant cavaliers,
Despite the weakness of his mouth and chin,
The stamp of natures easily deceived—
Show'd at a glance the well-bred gentleman.
The other, Amos Thorne, whose clear-cut face
With something of the air of men you meet
In crowded cities, where the greed of gold
Hardens the eye and tramples out the soul,
Had the appearance of a man whose thoughts
Were solely centred on his own success;
Yet in courteous strain, addressing Ernest,
He was first to speak—

"I think this well—
Pointing towards it—and that strip of ground
Have been the paltry cause of much ill-will
Between our fathers—it would vex me much
To think the quarrel should descend to us;
Besides, I feel the land by right is yours,
And though the lawyers say you cannot show
A proper title—I have none I know;
And it seems hard that such a trivial thing
Should breed ill-will—between near neighbours too—

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This very day I spoke to my head-clerk—
Told him to lose no time, but write at once,
To let you know the suit is at an end—
That I give up my claim—if claim I have—
On this rough wilderness, and dried-up spring;
And idly chancing to have wandered here,
By great good fortune meet you at the gate."

Then Ernest, somewhat puzzled and perplex'd,
At this kind greeting from the miller's son,
Took both his hands, and thank'd him for the gift
For gift it was, he said—and hoped that they
Would be for ever after, best of friends:
And so they parted, but from that time forth,
Young Amos Thorne was always at the Hall;
And all the village wonder'd when men spoke
Of this new friendship—boding ill, some said,
To the young squire—for Amos Thorne had once,
In speaking of the suit, been heard to say,
(This happen'd just before the miller's death,)
Were he his father, he would have the well,
And house and land beside—the miller smiled

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And ask'd him how, and Amos turn'd away
Muttering, "By wiser means than idle words."

Yet still the two young men continued friends,
In spite of many a gossip's prophecy;
Ernest, so reckless, generous and free,
Had found a stay, some said, in Amos Thorne,
Into whose hands the squire entrusted all
The management and farming of his lands;
And all went well, except for vague reports
That reach'd their ears—chiefly from Amos Thorne—
About the young squire's great extravagance;
But Ernest, speaking of him, prais'd his friend,
Saying he never knew a trustier man;
And even when the whisper'd rumour rose
Of many a heavy loss upon the turf,
Still the young squire had money at command,
While Amos shook his head, and hinted oft,
How hard he found it to restrain his friend
From throwing all his fortune to the winds.
So time went on, and many a daylight grey
Surprised with its pure light, the old red house

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Ringing with revelry and wild debauch,
And gambler's oaths, and rattlings of the dice;
When Amos with clear voice would chide his friend—
Heated and drench'd with wine—for playing high,
And sitting up so late night after night;
(But many knew how Amos kept the glass
At Ernest's side ever supplied with wine,
When all the while his own remain'd untouch'd.)

After a wild carouse the night before,
One morning Amos came to Ernest's room,
Where he was sleeping off the fire of wine
In heavy slumber; crept across the room,
And placing on his bed a parchment deed,
Begg'd him to wake at once, as he must speak
On matters most important to them both:
"You know," he said, "how much I have advanced—
I lose by this transaction many a pound—
But let that pass—I wish to serve my friend;
And perhaps, considering all things, it is best
That you should settle matters as you have,
By giving up at once this house and land."

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Then Ernest started up, and rubb'd his eyes—
Seeing his name in full—attested too
By other names—his valet's and the groom's—
(Two men whom Amos, several months ago,
Had recommended warmly to the squire
As honest trusty fellows ;) "Strange," Ernest said,
"That I remember nothing of this deed—
You say I sign'd it as I went to bed?
But there it is, and witness'd as I see
By my two servants ; but although I drank—
Full freely as I know—I bear in mind
All that took place : I never sign'd that deed!
Yet there my name—my own handwriting too—
Pray leave me Amos for a little while,
And send my valet, I would speak with him."
So, the servant came, and bore out all
That Amos Thorne had said about the deed.

The poor young squire confused and troubled much,
Puzzled his aching head for many an hour ;
When Amos knocking at his chamber door,
Ask'd leave to enter, and with crafty smile,

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Addressing Ernest, said, "At last my friend
I trust you see this matter straight and clear?"
And Ernest, standing like a young athlete
Half-dress'd before him,—struck him in the face:
"At last I do, false villain," he exclaim'd,
"You have deceiv'd me, tempted me to drink,
Placed cards and dice before me, given me gold,
Amus'd me well no doubt with many a wile,
While you were playing out your quiet game;
Nor do I now, although upon that deed
I see my writing, think it sign'd by me:
I curse the day I ever saw your face,
You fawning knave, my eyes are open now,
And have been opening for the last few weeks,
To find myself a beggar, and the time
Pass'd for redemption: but I tell you this,
The only thing inducing me to live,
Or not to strike you dead before me now,
Is that I live for vengeance. Mark me well
And tremble, Amos Thorne, the day will come,
When you, a coward, even shall pray for death
To hide you from me, and by Heaven I swear

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To spare you not, but to be all-aveng'd
On you, through everything you hold most dear;
For God himself, in justice, will not screen
A reptile such as you, from my revenge."

Then, Amos Thorne, his hand press'd to his face,
Smoothly replied, "No matter, Maxwell, I forgive you all
Your hasty words, even your angry blow;
But after what has pass'd, I cannot now
Do as I first intended—let you live
With me as guest—but you must go at once;
Take anything about you that you want—
I would not be too hard—and any time
You want assistance, surely let me know;
For though the sums of money I have lent,
To meet your follies, have impoverish'd me much—
I would befriend you—but you must not think
That though you give me up this house and land,
I shall be half repaid for all I lent—
However that may rest—now, as I said,
Take anything about you you require,
And leave the house, and as for your revenge—

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Time soon will cool it, and apply to me,
Should you at any time require my aid."

And Ernest, having dress'd, without a word
Went from the room with calm and measur'd step,
Shrinking from Amos Thorne's extended hand,
As though he saw a serpent in his path.

For several days, within the village inn,
He brooded on his troubles, drinking deep—
Speaking of vengeance to the few who still
Gather'd around him; then—his money spent—
His friends fell off and left him one by one
To take the stronger side; and Amos Thorne,
Lord of the old red hall, heard that his foe
Going to London—having changed his name—
Had there enlisted, or had found employ;
And so the nine days' wonder pass'd away.

Then the new squire rose greatly in esteem,
And all the neighbours bow'd before the man
Who held such wealth—they made him justice—

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Would have crown'd him king of all the village,
Had they own'd a crown—such virtue springs from wealth—
And yet with all his money he was mean ;
It was not for the benefits conferr'd
They worshipp'd this new idol, but because
The idol shone with gold ; and yet a few—
They were the poorest, always in the wrong—
Would often sigh to have young Ernest back,
And sometimes hinted at injustice done ;
"The Maxwells," said they, "never sent us back
With empty hands, when we required their aid,
But this proud upstart grudges every groat,
Unless his name appear in public print,
Heading a list of charitable funds
Of which we scarcely ever touch a tithe ;"
But these cantankerous folk were soon put down,
And Ernest's generous deeds, and kindly words
Pass'd with the past, forgotten in the glare
Of Amos Thorne's success and hoarded wealth.

Yet in one false heart still remembrance lurk'd

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With secret fears, for Amos, when returning from the mill,
Towards his mansion, in the dusk of eve,
Would raise up phantoms of a stalwart form,
With curly golden hair, and flashing eyes,
Such as confronted him some years ago ;
And many a restless night the miller pass'd,
Dreaming of vengeance unaccomplish'd yet,
Hovering above him ; then, as time pass'd on,
He grew more callous, and would softly speak,
In pitying tones, of Ernest Maxwell's fate—
Lamenting his hot temper, and the way
He parted from him—for he wish'd, he said,
To save, not injure ; but the drink—the drink—
No doubt his foolish friend had long succumb'd
To that foul evil, and had died the death—
For he had tried to trace him many a time—
And every time had fail'd. So Amos Thorne
Grew in esteem, and favour with mankind,
Riches flow'd on him, everything he touch'd,
Proved a success : lucky even in love—
For in the daughter of a neighbouring squire,
He found a bride, who also brought him wealth,

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And in due course, an heir, on whom his sire
Doted; speaking of the rank his wealth would win,
When he should be a man. Then Amos Thorne,
Still more ambitious, gave his foreman charge
Of all his village trade, and went to town,
Buying in London a gigantic pile
For warehousing his goods, and rebuilding part,
Furnish'd a costly dwelling by its side,
To which he brought his wife and infant son.
There, honour'd by the honour'd, he became
A prince of merchants, and the stream of gold
He lusted after, still flow'd ever in;
Yet even above his wealth, his lands, his honours,
He loved one thing more—his little sturdy boy—
His love for him, the one redeeming virtue of his life.

It chanced one evening, when the strong wild wind
Was driving all the clouds across the moon—
Like scatter'd flocks in flight from howling wolves—
And lashing all the river, till the stream
Broke on the bases of the buildings tall
Bounding its banks, in little crested waves;

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That Amos Thorne sat talking with his wife,
Late in the evening—no time had he to spare
Ever in daylight—and his gentle wife
Was urging him to rest, and give up work,
And live upon the fortune he had made;
But no, he said, he labour'd for his boy,
And still would labour, while the gold came in;
Then feeling tired, rose up to go to bed,
But entering first the room above their own—
Where in his little cot, their darling slept—
Bent over him and kiss'd him, and retir'd.

Then from a heavy slumber, Amos Thorne
Awoke, and heard a most unusual noise—
Louder than the wind—crackling and roaring
And the cries of men; then a flash of light,
And then another flooded all the room
With brightest crimson, and the cries increas'd:
So starting up at once, he rous'd his wife—
"Awake," he yell'd, "the warehouse is on fire!"
And leaping from the bed he reach'd the door,
Open'd it, and fell back before the cloud

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Of dense, black, heated smoke that filled the room :
At last the engines came from every side,
Racing through the street, with sweating steeds
And shouting men, who push'd aside the crowd ;
And then commenc'd the elemental strife—
Water against the powers of furious flames
And driving winds—amidst the hiss of steam ;
And many men rush'd through the burning house,
And bore the merchant-prince into the street,
And also bore his wife, and all the servants
Finding escape, had gather'd in the street.

Then, Amos Thorne recovering his voice,
(The suffocating smoke he had inhaled
Had stretch'd him senseless) said, "And all are saved?"
And several answered, "All." "My boy," he cried,
"Bring him to me at once, this dreadful scene—
So awful even to us—must frighten him ;
Bring him to me ;" and no one spoke a word.
"O God !" he howl'd, "I see the truth at last,
My boy is sleeping in that fearful fire.
A thousand pounds—ten thousand to the man

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Who rescues him alive:" but no one moved;
The fire was raging fiercer than before,
And all the warehouse glow'd an earthly hell,
And all the dwelling-house was girt with flame,
And none dare venture, and the father moan'd,
And grovelled on the ground, and cried for death
To come and hide him from his agony.

Then from out the crowd, a tall fair man
In fireman's dress, strode quickly to his side;
"Rouse yourself," said he, to the crouching form,
"The time is pressing, show me your boy's room:"
And Amos Thorne arose, and pointing out
The window, cried, "But bring me back my boy
Alive, or dead, and half I have is yours."
And the fireman left, saying, "If God allow me
I will bring him back." Soon they saw him pass
By the steep ladder, up the fiery wall,
And clinging to the sill, spring to the room;
And other firemen spoke to Amos Thorne,
Saying, "If man can save him that man will—
We fear, however, he will be too late—

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The floors are flaming;" and then Amos Thorne
Ask'd them his name: "We know not," several said,
"His real name. When first he joined our corps,
We nicknamed him—seeing his soft white hands
And woman's wrists—the Gentleman.
But after his escapes and desperate deeds—
Passing unharm'd through fire—Dare-devil Dick."
(They little knew his bones were of the bone
That fitted gauntlets of the knights of old,
Small for the hands of their hard-working race,
But which did doughty deeds in days of steel.)

Then came a cry, "He comes!" and Amos Thorne
Saw a brass helmet gleaming through the fire—
A million jets of flame and fiery sparks—
Heard thunder roll—and felt an earthquake's shock—
And all the flooring sank and fell away—
And all the air glow'd hot with ruddy heat;
But still the fireman held the tottering sill,
Grasping a burden in his other arm;
And passing swiftly from the burning gap
By which he entered, shortly reached the street—

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Safe with the child he saved—but all his face
Was blacken'd by the fire, his golden beard
Was singed and scorch'd, and all the flesh
Was blister'd on his hands; and Amos Thorne,
Rushing towards him, begged him "name a sum,
And do not be afraid to make it high,
And let me know your name, for you have pluck'd
My greatest treasure from the jaws of death."

And then the fireman, holding still the boy—
Whose tiny arms were claspt around his neck—
Turning his head, said, "Better not my name,
And as for money, I have risk'd my life,
I value that beyond your purse of gold."
But Amos Thorne insisted on his name:
And then the fireman, pushing back his helm,
Said, "I am one who many years ago
Was foully driven from his fathers' home—
Tempted to a hell, more cruel than those flames,
From whose fierce tongues I snatch'd your slumbering boy;
I, too, am one who vow'd a vengeance—he to whom you gave

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A gift in days gone by—a dried-up well—
Gaining vile ends with friendship-feigning tongue—
Now take a gift from me, and—my revenge !"
He placed the boy within his father's arms,
And mingled with the crowd.
A few weeks pass'd,
And Amos Thorne lay dying in his bed—
The wild emotions of that fearful night working his doom—
But just before he died, made full confession ;
Saying he had forged young Maxwell's name,
By the two servants' aid, whom he had bribed
To act his will ; and begged the house and land
Might be restored to him, who own'd them yet,
In justice, and by every right of law ;
Telling how he embezzled every rent that pass'd
Through his vile hands. So Ernest got all back—
With interest as well for many a year—
And all the village blazed with brilliant lights,
When the young squire at last regain'd his own ;
And all his friends return'd, but he, more wise
Than when they left him, let them go their ways :

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Then marrying and settling down at last,
The old red hall grew glad with children's glee,
And merry voices, and on winter eves
The little ones would climb upon his knee,
Never too tired to hear their father tell
How the great God had granted his revenge.

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A LIFE MYSTERY.

AFTER long wintry nights and stormy days,
Spring's fairy wand again had touch'd the land,
And diadem'd the cliffs upon the shore,
That frown'd like grim, grey vikings o'er the sea,
With crowns of golden gorse, all interset
With amethystine gems of orchis flowers;
Again had soothed the sea until its waves,
Subdued and softened, at the crag's strong feet
Cast emeralds and pearls.
Near the high-tide mark—
Built of the remnants that some wreck had left—
Stood a poor cottage, bright with saline spray
The winter's storms had borne upon their wings;
And at its doorway—busy 'mongst his nets—
The rough-clad fisherman, who own'd the cot,
Troll'd out sea ditties with a mellow voice,

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Or mused on storms now past, or of the spoil
He soon should wrest from Ocean's yielding arms ;
All seem'd at peace, save where upon the shore
Before the cottage, pacing to and fro,
His eyes bent on a letter just receiv'd,
One figure mov'd : a stern cold silent man,
A man whom no one but the boatman knew,
From whom, some years ago, he hired a room ;
Nameless except for names the children gave him,
Miser and hermit, ogre too sometimes,
And now the letter only was address'd
To "Hubert," with his landlord's name beneath.
A strange stern man, yet when the fever raged,
And death was busy with the village poor,
He often proved a brave and tender nurse ;
Yet when the neighbours call'd with all their thanks
They found him colder, harsher than before,
And so they left him to his lonely life.

The man had wander'd there, perchance an hour,
When down the cliff along the breezy path
That wound in tortuous turnings to its base,

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Another figure came upon the scene;
A hale old man, whose smooth and ruddy cheeks
Almost belied the silver of his hair;
Vivian the rector, squire and magistrate,
He reign'd the happy king of his small realm,
His crown his neighbour's love, his sceptre faith.

He overtaking Hubert, as he pass'd, spoke—
As all men will speak—about the day,
Praising the beauty of the genial morn;
But noting Hubert's weary moody look,
Changed his discourse to ask about his health;
But Hubert bowing, tried to turn away,
Crushing a black-seal'd letter in his hands:
Then the old rector, humouring his mood,
Pass'd on in silence by the sandy bay.
Yet some strange impulse made him check his steps,
He saw the troubled look in Hubert's eyes
He knew was but allied with grief and pain,
And risking a rebuff, he spoke once more.
"Friend," said he, "trust to me, nor think me one
Of those too curious men who probe the sore,

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Merely to gain fresh knowledge for themselves;
You have some sorrow rankling in your heart—
Sorrow conceal'd doth prey upon the soul:
I do not preach that baneful power of priests—
Confession's doctrine—but I surely know,
How from the first lisp'd word of infant pain,
Down to the deathbed murmurs of the man,
That when you have a trouble it must out—
Troubles conceal'd, do eat away the life:
Even I, when I return to my old house,
Where my good dame will meet me at the porch,
Shall have to tell her how instead of tracts,
She had selected for some poor old men,
Whose eyes have been but dim for many a year,
I fill'd my pockets with the 'fragrant weed,'
I shall not rest quite happy till I do:
Come, trust to me, I know you have some grief
Believe me half will vanish soon as told."

Then Hubert answering, said, "I see I speak
To one whom rumour says is loved by all;
But who loves me, who trusts me? no not one;

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If grief conceal'd could kill, I should be dead!
You come to me, and praise a genial morn,
Better the tempest and the storm-cloud's crash,
Than all this weariness of nature's charms.
Here is a letter I this morn receiv'd
From an old servant, who is faithful yet,
It tells me of the death of one whose breasts
Sustain'd and shelter'd all my infant hours,
But who with dying lips declar'd me false,
Accus'd me of a crime that chills my blood,
A crime, that in the fever of my dreams, clings to me ever:
Can I trust you more than her who bare me,
You a well paid priest, preaching Christ's cross,
In luxury and ease? I tell you, no!
Leave me to wait, and pray, and hope for rest
In this poor refuge where the world forgets."

Then answer'd Vivian gently, "Do you think
That I should wish to drive you from your cell,
The little room you hold in yon poor cot?
Not I indeed, nor can I think you false,

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Though p'r'aps unfortunate in this world's strife,
And that you brood too much upon your woes:
But pity you I do with all my soul,
For I esteem that man but cowardly,
A soldier all-unworthy of his trust,
Who like a drivelling monk should waste his hours,
In hiding from a world where he should work
Among his fellows, not become a drone;
Could you believe that warrior good and true,
Who at the first repulse, should fly in fear,
And leave his comrades sweating in the ranks,
Should not fight with them, but should 'hope and pray,'
Until the din of battle should be done?
'Tis good to pray, but 'tis divine to work!
Listen, my friend, when I was but a boy,
I treasur'd up some bits of colour'd glass,
And in the winter's snow, with one red tint,
The world would flush and glow with summer's heat;
And in the summer, I could change its green
To autumn's yellow leaf, or blight the spring
With winter's frosty blue; and often now,
When troubled and perplex'd with worldly cares,

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I smile, and change the hue before my mind.
And you have doubtless often heard of men
Who passing from a valley dense with mist,
Climbing the summit of a lofty hill,
Have seen the sun's rays beating on the clouds,
While all the vapours trembled at their feet?
Come, climb the hill, leave sorrow's shades below;
The sun yet shineth brightly o'er your head!"
Then answered Hubert, "I have gazed too long
At scenes of sorrow, can I change their tone?
The mists around the hill are drear and cold,
My weary limbs are faltering at its base,
My heart is breaking in a vale of gloom;
There must I wait to pray perchance ere death,
The clouds may be dispelled that light may come.
But, rector, if you will, receive my trust,
And give your patience—if you have the time—
While I recount the mystery of my life."
And Vivian, walking with him on the shore,
Hubert with trembling voice commenc'd his tale.

"Far to the north, among the heathery hills,

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On one side bounded by the rolling sea,
Stood, grey with age, the house where I was born;
Half farm, half fortress, had its walls a tongue,
It could have told of many a fiery fray.

"It chanced one evening, full of mist and rain,
We sat, my little brother and myself,
I just sixteen, he only half my years,
Within a panell'd parlour of the tower;
My father's chamber, where he kept his guns
And other implements a sportsman loves;
The blazing logs, with ruddy, glimmering glare,
Threw giant shadows on the oaken wall,
Hovering above our heads, like household gods;
While little Gerald, stretch'd before the fire,
Played with two deer-hounds, laughing as he lay;
When through the open door my mother pass'd
With rapid step, and somewhat anxious air.
Early that morning to the neighbouring town—
A few miles off—my father rode away
On urgent business, saying he would return
Long before dusk, yet he had not arrived,

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And never having been so late before,
As hour on hour was chim'd, we grew alarm'd;
My mother rang at last, and told her maid
To send the butler—stalwart Stephen Webb—
More friend than servant was he with us all,
For with my father he had fought abroad,
And once had saved his life, by bearing him
Down-stricken by a bullet, to the rear,
While the fierce fight raged hotly all around.
Well, Stephen shared our fears, and said the mist
Hung heavier than before, and ask'd for leave
To start at once across the barren moor,
And seek his master, and as I would go,
We both set out amid the mire and rain,
Following the cart-tracks leading to the town.
Twice had I fancied we had lost our road,
But Stephen proved a sure and trusty guide,
And while the old church tower was striking twelve,
We reach'd the portals of the village inn;
And at our lusty shouts and cries for aid,
Came the old landlord, yawning, half-asleep,
To say the colonel, full eight hours ago,

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Had ridden off in hurry to get home.
We knew not what to think—still there was hope
He might have ridden by the lower road—
A longer route, but certainly more safe
Than that bleak, rugged track across the fells.
Then he advised us both to rest awhile,
And wait till morning should dispel the mist,
When, should the colonel not have reach'd his home,
With all the village he would scour the hills;
But no, we could not rest, so wander'd back,
To hear my father had not yet return'd.

"When the first glimmering streak of opening day
Broke on the fells, with every man and boy,
Eager for search, again we hurried forth;
The fog had somewhat clear'd, yet Stephen still
Kept by the beaten track:—at last a shout,
And then another, louder still, we heard;
And running to his side, we saw with dread
A horse's hoof-prints cut into the turf,
As though the animal going at speed,
Had tried to check, in vain, its swift career;
We found their end upon the yawning brink.

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Of an old quarry—long ago disused—
And there below us, horse and rider lay;
I gain'd the bottom—how I hardly know—
But by my father's side I found myself;
His heart still beat, the horse was cold and dead,
And he so crush'd and bruis'd, it scarce seem'd he.
We bore him home, and through three dreadful days
He linger'd on; the fourth, the pain was gone;
And then came hopes too soon to be dispell'd.
That very night he called me to his side;
'Hubert,' he said, 'I suffer now no more,
The pain has pass'd, but death is near at hand;
And I would speak to you before I die,
For I would leave a sacred trust to you,
Your brother Gerald: guard him, Hubert, well,
A few years hence, and you will be of age—
And our estates you know are all entailed—
Be just to Gerald, and be generous, too,
And never let my darling feel my loss.
God bless you, Hubert, it is hard to die,
Hard to part from you, but my time has come,
And from this night we meet on earth no more.'

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I bowed above his hand, and swore to act
In all as he required: then he was silent,
But I saw him smile as though at peace,
And even when dead, his face still seem'd to smile,
As though he died contented, trusting me.

"After his death, the little boy and I
Were close companions, shared the self-same room—
I never thought him safe unless near me—
And after study we would saunter forth,
Or ride our ponies over hill and dale,
And he would chatter of his future fate,
And tell me how he hated even the thought
Of that tame life, chain'd down to 'book and bell,'
A country parson, buried in the fells;
(A life his mother wish'd him to adopt),
But he would be a sailor bold and free,
And perhaps might rise—so large were his ideas—
To be a brave sea-captain, great as he
Who held the tiny tug at his command,
That during adverse winds, or idle calms,
Would drag the traders from our land-lock'd bay.

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The little fellow, too, returned one eve—
Having been out without me—ill at ease,
And when we ask'd him why he seem'd so dull?
Said he was tired, and went away to bed.
Next morning he was up by break of day,
And rousing me, we started rod in hand
To fish the streamlet, but he soon sat down,
And turning back his sleeve, show'd me his arm
Inflam'd and red, and over his white wrist
A crown and anchor punctur'd in the skin,
Beneath it the initials of his name;
Said that a boatman's son had prick'd it in,
When he was at the port but yesterday,
And laugh'd in telling how he bore the pain;
He was almost a sailor, was he not?
And so he babbled on, while I sat there,
Watching the crystal streamlet hurrying on,
Past the fair flowers that hid the rocks below,
To feed the ocean's ever-greedy maw.

"Then we return'd, and following down the stream
Came to the shore: there, rent by storms

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Of tempest and of war, stood an old keep;
No ivy cloth'd its walls, no verdure near it
Save one stunted thorn, bent by the storm-king
Like a warrior's bow; the rugged walls
Where tapestry had hung in years gone by,
Were cloth'd with lichen, scarlet, gold, and grey,
And close beside it, underneath its walls,
There yawn'd a curious chasm in the cliff,
Where, when the tide was up, on calmest days
The water ever seem'd to seethe and boil;
But when a tempest vexed the angry sea,
The waves would spout in columns to the sky,
Thundering like some huge battery of guns;
There, many an hour, grasping the wither'd grass,
Have I gazed down its smooth and slippery sides—
Cover'd with slimy weed and deep red spots—
Which, though but simple sea anemones,
Look'd more to me like stains of clotted gore:
A strange, forbidding place it was indeed,
Shunn'd by the country folk, who told strange tales
Of awful sights and sounds, and I myself,
Borne on the nightmare in my boyish dreams,

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Hover'd above that chasm constantly,
And waking ever thought to go no more
Near its abysses; still I went the same,
The horror that I felt, attracted me,
While some keen influence, subtler even than dreams,
Warn'd me away: I understand it now.

"Ten uneventful years had rolled their course,
And Gerald, just eighteen, an Oxford man,
His fancy for the sea entirely fled,
Was just completing his first college term;
And I, as well, casting aside the ambition of my life,
Had left my father's sword to rust in peace,
Bearing in mind the solemn trust I bore;
And yet I sometimes thought—I know not why—
That all my trouble had been thrown away,
For Gerald never understood me well;
And when I check'd some great extravagance,
Would sneer, and say it was to save my own,
God knows I would have given him all my own!
Just at that time he was expecting me,
For he had written—earnestly for him—

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To say he had some bills he could not meet,
And would I come prepared with ready cash?
And that we might return together home.
Of course I went, and found him dull and sad,
But after all his troubles were removed,
His careless happy manner soon came back;
I rather feared, from all I saw and heard,
That Gerald's college life was wildly spent;
But then no man had more kind friends than he,
Though but a fresh-man; still I knew too well,
How from the purse's fulness, friends spring up,
A goodly crop—until the purse be bare.

"So we returned—I, to my usual life,
Reclaiming much waste land about the farm;
He, to the hunting-field and country squires,
Who loved poor Gerald's free and jovial ways.

"Then came a change upon our dull old house;
My mother—who had been for some few weeks
Nursing a friend, her schoolmate years ago—
Wrote back to say that her old friend had died,

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That she herself was coming home at once,
Accompanied by a little orphan girl.
When they arrived, I chanced to be away,
But in the evening, coming from the fields,
Pass'd by the lawn, and through the open door—
I never stayed to change my muddy clothes—
Enter'd at once my mother's favourite room;
And there I found her, and beside her chair—
I started quickly back—a fair tall girl
Blushing in womanhood; I thought to see
Some little fairy, nursing perhaps a doll,
Or conning on the ground some infant's tale,
But there instead, the fairest lady I had ever seen,
Sweet with the radiance of her seventeenth year;
Then I advanced again and took her hand,
And welcom'd her with all the grace I could;
But her bright beauty burst into my blood,
And made me feel uncouth and ill at ease,
Nor did I seem myself till she retired.
Then, smiling said my mother, as I stood, staring and
spellbound,
'What think you, Hubert, of my little girl?

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I almost hope, should Gerald have good eyes,
He may perhaps some day thank me for a wife,
She would reclaim him soon from his wild ways;
Is she not lovely, Hubert?' Then again,
I felt the tell-tale blood rush to my brow,
And murmuring some excuse I left the room.

"A few weeks pass'd, and Gerald once again
Return'd to college, I to my busy life about the land,
Striving to keep my thoughts from that fair girl,
Who in my eyes grew lovelier day by day,
A woman—but in years a child to me;
And many an hour I gave to bitter thought,
Because my passion grew intolerant;
But Eva with her gentle loving ways
Drew me towards her more and more and more,
Never at peace except when by her side;
And Eva shared my walks, and oftentimes,
We read together from the self-same book;
And I was ever wistful as we read,
To put aside the masses of her hair,
That flow'd in heavy ripples to her knee,

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Hair, where the sunlight struck it, burnish'd gold,
But shadow-soften'd, duskier than the night;
And then the bonds of burning love unloos'd,
Within the coral cloisters of her ear,
To whisper prayers perchance might reach the shrine,
Where beat the virgin image of her heart;
Yet ever I refrain'd, and held them back.

"So pass'd my days till Gerald came again,
Merry as ever, looking somewhat pale,
And burden'd, as he ever was, with bills;
And many an idle rumour reach'd my ear,
Of his extravagance and wicked life—
Idle, because I always blew them back
As whisper'd slanders, though I fear'd their truth;
But still resolv'd to seize the first good chance
To reason with him—though it always seem'd
More hard for me to blame, than him to hear—
For from a boy he chafed at all control.

"Well, Rector, it so happen'd that one eve,
When the bright moon was rising from the sea,

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I wander'd forth to muse upon my love,
And thinking much, I ever wander'd on,
Not noting where I went, but suddenly
I came upon that grim old ruin'd keep—
Flooded with silver light, and draped in shade,
It rose a spectre of the days of yore;
And yawning like a grave before my feet,
That curious chasm cutting through the cliff.
I stood there watching, far away to sea,
A little sail crossing the moonbeam's track,
When I distinguish'd footsteps on the shore,
And then I heard my brother's well-known voice
Chanting a merry stave as he approach'd;
Now comes my time, I thought, to say my say—
He had avoided me so much of late—
I call'd his name, and Gerald hurrying up
The narrow pathway, soon was by my side;
And then I told him all that I had heard,
Implor'd of him to spare our income more,
And not to waste so much, on thieves and rogues;
To think a little, and prepare somewhat,
For those new duties, he must undertake

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So shortly, in another sphere of life.

"Then Gerald answer'd quickly, 'Well, I know
That what I spend is yours, by right of law,
But that is finish'd; I would rather starve,
Than rob you, Hubert, after this one term;
For I shall have my living in the fells,
And pretty Eva—so my mother says—
To help me with her counsels and her purse;
And I know Eva will be nowise loath
To leave the dull routine within the hall;
You keep such guard upon my promis'd bride,
I think sometimes you envy me my fate.
And do you lecture her, as you do me?
Or do you teach her farming as you stroll,
Hour after hour, among your oozy fields?'

"And then I answer'd somewhat hastily—
His words annoy'd me, and I felt their sting—
And told him to be steady, and amend,
For he should never claim her for his wife,
To bring her down to penury and grief;

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Told him how I had banish'd hopes for him,
Of how my hand had itch'd to draw the sword—
That now lay rusting in my father's room—
To gleam once more wherever fight be thick ;
How I dispell'd those glorious dreams for him:
But Gerald still replied, in sneering tones,
'Poor dreamer !—who can preach so well to me,
Is your true heart so pure and free from guile ?
You keep your secrets admirably conceal'd,
And yet I think I read one pretty well,
Whenever little Eva speaks to you :
You covet her, your brother's promis'd bride,
Preaching the while to him of generous deeds,
Yet grudging him the only thing on earth
Could wean him from the evil of his ways !—
But let it pass—I am not one of those
Who let a jealous nature eat them up,
And Eva too would spare you, as I know,
For though she often talks to me of you,
Makes merry jests about her faithful squire,
Still says she loves you with a daughter's love,
And then—but there, I think I say enough.'

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Then all the angry blood within me boil'd,
And burning with my passion I replied,
'Gerald my brother, brother but in name
From this time forth, yes, you have said enough,
For you have touch'd the trouble of my life—
I have loved Eva, and I love her now—
But in all pureness, and all chastity,
And I have kept my love within myself—
At least I thought so—for my brother's sake;
But you who bare the wound must hear the truth,
If it be bitter, it is still the truth—
Your love compar'd with mine, is like the dross
That furnace fires do drive from molten gold,
Your words are arrows, steep'd in venom'd thoughts;
But still I ask you this, and you must swear
By all your honour and your gentle birth,
Does Eva love you? Swear it on your soul.'
And Gerald sware it—and I turn'd away.
But suddenly came flashing through my brain
Bewilder'd by my wrath—my broken vow—
The solemn trust betray'd. Again I spoke,
'Once more my brother, as when we were boys,

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Your arm around my neck, for mine the fault,
Forgive me, Gerald, for my heart has sinn'd,
And I but lose myself in loving her—
And I but save myself in losing her—
Before the daybreak I shall be away,
Take all I have, but think sometimes of me,
And when long years have pass'd, and I can feel
That I have fought this battle with myself,
Should some old man, gray-headed, reach your door,
Craving to seek a seat beside your hearth,
Then let that wanderer in, and welcome him,
Your brother will have purg'd his soul at last;
Farewell, and may the God who hears us now,
Bless you, and keep you, as you act by her.'
Then I departed, but once looking round,
Saw my poor brother standing by the tower,
White in the moonbeams, buried in his thoughts.
Then I reach'd the Hall—mine now no longer—
Entering unperceiv'd I gain'd my chamber,
And with hasty hand, seizing a purse of gold,
Crept from its granite portals like a thief.

"I can call to mind all I have told,

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But after that a blank, a gloomy void
Where all had been so fair: I pass'd the village,
Heard a friendly voice say something,
But press'd onward, answering not;
Travell'd by rail, and from a busy port
Took passage in a vessel bound to sea;
Days pass'd, and then a hazy bank of clouds
Gradually took form of lofty hills,
Again a port, and I had landed in America;
Then buying a rifle, I at once sped on,
Straight for the forest and the wilderness.
No matter how I liv'd—but live I did—
For many a year in those vast solitudes;
And many a wild adventure could I tell,
And how I gain'd a name for desperate deeds
Among the trappers of the Indian tribes,
In many a deadly struggle, 'Heart of Steel;'
But little guess'd they when they gave the name,
The courage that they prais'd was but despair,
And better had they named me 'Broken Heart,'
That in its reckless darings sought for rest.
So life clung to me, while the silver threads

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Each year grew thicker in my sable beard,
And yet I had not purified my soul—
Eva's bright beauty hover'd round me still—
Till one wild night as crouching by my fire,
Tired out, I slept, and sleeping dream'd a dream ;
' Poor dreamer,' as my brother would have said.
I thought I wandered over some dark swamp,
Full of corruption and of loathsome forms,
That gnash'd their jaws upon me as I pass'd,
The darkness grew still darker, and the path,
A narrow line of logs, on each side death ;
When straight before me flash'd a glorious star—
Flooding my pathway with its brilliant beams—
And all the monsters sank in the morass :
Then as I travell'd on, the bright star burst,
And where its light had shone, pallid as death,
With beckoning hands stood gentle Eva's form—
I strove to reach her, stumbled, and awoke.

" Then came a gnawing hunger to return—
A yearning for my home—to see them all—
To clasp them once again within my arms,

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My mother—Gerald—Eva, and I felt
That I could joy to see their happiness,
Could I but see them safe and well once more;
So I return'd, embark'd, and once again
The walls of England whiten'd in the sun.
I reach'd the little town—how chang'd it seem'd—
How dwarf'd and alter'd everything appear'd,
After the giant solitudes I left, and when I stopt
Beside the streamlet on the purple moor—
Although my dear old home was in my sight—
I almost felt inclin'd to turn my steps.
Still I went on, and picturing to myself,
My mother's face—dear Gerald's sunny smile—
And Eva—perhaps a comely matron grown,
With rosy children clinging to her robe—
I felt a victor wending from the fray.

"But when I reach'd the gate, my spirit sank;
How all was chang'd—the weedy drive—
The gate with broken hinge, and that I saw
A thin blue wreath of smoke, rise curling up,
Above the sheltering trees around the Hall,

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The place might be deserted. Then with feeble steps,
Creeping along, I saw a bent old man;
Could that be Stephen—he whom I had left
Stalwart and strong? I gain'd his side—
He star'd, but knew me not—my bearded face
And weather-beaten skin had chang'd me too;
Then I address'd him, and at once my voice
Awoke his slumbering memory again.

"'Oh, Hubert! oh, my master, is it you?
Come home at last—thank God, at last come home—
To face them all, and clear you from the shame.'
I took his hand, I knew not what to say—
Old age had made him childish, I supposed—
'Now, Stephen, tell me,' cried I, 'of them all—
My mother—Gerald—Eva, are they well?
Tell me at once—' And then he told me all.

"It seem'd that on the night I left the Hall,
My mother found the little hurried note,
I left upon the table in my room
Telling her that my honour was at stake,

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That I must part from her perchance for years,
So wrote the farewell that I could not speak:
Then in the morning Gerald too was miss'd,
And after that a servant from the farm—
A little milk-maid—said she had seen us both
Close to the tower—was sure she had seen us both—
The moon so bright—had heard us uttering words
As though in anger, and believ'd I spoke
Of loving some one well—had fancied too
She caught Miss Eva's name—and then pass'd on,
Feeling afraid to stay and listen more.

"After this news the household all set out
Straight for the tower, where one of them had found
Poor Gerald's cap, and near it, on the rocks,
A little dark-hued pool, fast drying up.
The man who first discern'd it, drawing back,
Call'd to his comrades; and they all came up,
And all declar'd it blood, and further on
Upon the wither'd turf, more stains of blood;
And all the grass was trampled near the brink
Of that fell chasm, and they all had fear

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To look upon the rocks that lay below;
Still they saw nothing but the slimy weed—
The wave-worn pebbles—and the banks of sand—
And so, supposing that the morning's tide
Had drawn his murder'd body to the sea,
Bearing their dreadful secret they return'd.

"Then all the country round rang with the crime,
And when the lawyer's son stood forth and told
How he had met me late that very night,
Haggard and pale, how when he spoke
I gave him no reply, but hurried on;
There scarce was one but who believed my guilt.

"Then, too, I heard how my sweet Eva pin'd—
Mine now in death—how with her dying lips
In face of all, had she declar'd me true
And innocent—how she had own'd her love
For me, not Gerald, and declar'd the day
Would surely come when they should doubt no more
My truth and honour, but believe with her.

"Then came soon after Eva's mournful death,

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The wandering state of my poor mother's mind;
Now weeping for her Gerald, cursing me,
And then forgetting all. She pass'd her days
Still at the Hall, but left it to decay;
All this I heard, but never spoke a word,
I seem'd asleep or stunn'd, I felt no pain,
No grief, and no surprise, my heart was numb'd,
I walked by Stephen's side as in a dream.

"Then I remember entering the Hall,
My mother's figure, how I claspt her knees
And begged her blessing, how she drove me forth
With bitter curses, and in frenzied tones
Bade me begone; how I awoke, giddy and faint,
To find old Stephen kneeling by my side,
And pouring some strong spirit down my throat;
How he helped me rise, and urging flight,
Led me away, imploring me to seek
Some place of safety, then to let him know
My sure address, when if he should see
Some change at last in my poor mother's mind,
He would inform me. This my welcome home.

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So I came here, lived as you know I live—
Avoiding all men—bearing on my brow
The crimson fillet of another's crime."

Then the old rector, taking Hubert's hand,
Said, "I believe you true and innocent,
Your secret is as safe within my breast
As in your own.—Come with me to my home."
And Hubert went, and many a time was there,
A favourite with the old man and his dame—
And by his son and daughter ever prais'd—
And by the village children ever lov'd—
For Hubert, now no longer cold and stern,
Had felt the burden lighten'd that he bore.
So Hubert pass'd his days—if not at rest,
An alter'd man indeed; now sketching scenes
Upon the rocky coast, for which his friend
Found readiest sale, or in his landlord's boat
Hauling the nets and toiling as they toil'd—
Those simple fishers of an earlier age—
To whom their Master gave a graver care.

Although the autumn had so far advanc'd

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The weather still was genial and warm,
Days as calm as when the halcyon brooded on the sea;
But now, the wild birds winging to the land—
The mass of threat'ning clouds from out the west—
The blood-red sunset and the heaving sea—
Bespoke a change. The boatmen talked of storms—
Drawing their nets and boats above the beach—
And watch'd the sea-line where no sail was seen.
Then in the gathering darkness of the night
The storm array'd its forces; first, a gust
Of wind fitfully moaning like a child in pain,
Some heavy drops of rain, a burst of wind
Still angrier than before, and then commenc'd
The battle nature fear'd, and when the dawn
First faintly broke, the air was fill'd with foam,
And bellowing waves burst on the beach
And thunder'd up the shore, or hissing back,
Drew all the shivering shingle to the sea.

Under the cliffs an anxious group of men—
Among them Hubert and the rector—stood
Watching a vessel beating up to wind:

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First one sail crack'd and blew away in rags,
Another split—the ship drove broadside on—
Then check'd again (they threw two anchors out)
Amidst a cloud of spray headed to wind;
Then the chains snapping, both its anchors gone,
Again the vessel hurried to its doom,
While the vast waves that bore it on their crests
Lifted it up, and dash'd it on the rocks,
Again, again, again, it rose and fell;
They saw the sailors, clustering like bees
Upon the rigging, shaken from their hold;
Then one more fearful crash and all were gone;
And where the ship had been, the surf was dark
With timber from the wreck, and floating goods,
And struggling souls, bound for Eternity.

The rector standing by the broken boat—
Twice had they launch'd it with a chosen crew,
But the wild waves had ever hurl'd it back,
As though it were a toy upon the shore—
The rector standing there, touch'd Hubert's arm,
Saying, "How strange God's ways, for He is good,

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And not a creature has been saved to-day;"
When Hubert, pointing, shouted in his ear,
"See, yonder, tossing there within the bay—
Is there not something bound upon that spar?
Look, it must be—it is indeed a man!
He rais'd his arm, so he is yet alive,
Ten minutes hence he drives beyond the point,
The tide is racing past it like a sluice,
Once past, no hope indeed, the cruel waves
Will beat his life out underneath the cliffs.
Quick, bring a strong light rope—you have one there—
I yet may save him, bind it to my wrist,
So I can loose it readily at will,
And men, slack well the rope and have no fear,
You all have seen me swim before to-day."
Then, though the rector strove to hold him back,
Through the first thundering wave he clove his way,
And to the rescue held his gallant course.

With eager eyes they watch'd him from the shore,
Beheld him dive beneath the breaking waves,
Swim up the others, then they saw him gain

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The floating spar, and seated on the end
Beheld him loose the rope from off his wrist
And bind it to a block; and then the cheer,
That greets a gallant deed's accomplishment,
Rang through the storm.
By slow degrees—
Fearing the heavy strain—they haul the rope,
And many a yard was coil'd, when suddenly
Arose a fearful cry, "Hubert—where is he?
He has lost his hold. Can any see him?
For there is but one, he, bound upon the spar;
Ah there! see yonder, on that wild wave's crest
Borne to destruction—see, he drifts away—
He cannot hold his own in that fierce tide—
Brave Hubert must be lost:" but calmly still
He struggled hard against his fearful fate.

Then some seized ropes and lines, and hurrying on,
Reach'd the tall cliffs, and there saw Hubert's form,
Torn, bruised, and breathless, cast upon the rocks;
When one brave boatman—lower'd by a rope—
Seizing his chance, caught hold of him at last,

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Binding him firmly with another rope,
And so they drew him from the surf below;
And that he still had life, was all they knew—
The jagged rocks had shatter'd all his frame—
So having cover'd him with rough sea-coats,
Some hurried for the doctor, while the rest
Waited around, and watch'd his struggling breath.

Then came the rector, and with tottering steps,
The man whom Hubert saved. Although half-dead
When first he touch'd the shore, he soon revived
Under the rector's care; and hearing all,
Begged to be brought at once to see the man,
Who had so bravely rescued him from death;
So they conducted him, and kneeling down
By Hubert's side, he press'd his pallid hand,
Thank'd him, and prayed to God he might be spared.

Soon as he spoke, they saw how Hubert flush'd,
Saw a strange eager light flash from his eyes,
Beheld him tightly grasp the stranger's arm,
And tear the sleeve back from the sun-burn'd wrist,

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Where they who were the nearest saw some lines,
Faintly engrav'd—an anchor and a crown.
And then the silver of his long grey beard
Grew crimson with a stream of spouting blood,
As with a cry, "O Gerald—brother—there is light at last!"
He fell back dead upon his brother's breast,
While on his brow—like some soft angel's kiss—
A ray of sunlight, through a storm-rent cloud,
Stream'd for an instant, and then pass'd away.

Then, the rough boatmen bore him from the cliff,
Gently, and tenderly as though they fear'd
To break the spell of rest-bestowing sleep.

A week had pass'd since that eventful storm,
When by the fresh-turfed grave, where Hubert lay,
The good old rector stood by Gerald's side:
Gerald—for it was he—dropt on his knees,
And covering his face with both his hands,
Said, "Rector, pray for me—here, by his grave—
Pray God to pardon me for that base lie,

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That idly utter'd, brought such ill to all;
Then I can tell you freely all that chanc'd,
After my brother left me by the tower.

"From a boy, truant from school, a man
Selfish and weak, I follow'd phantoms;
And like one who strays far from his path,
To seize a jewel gleaming like a star,
Passes through brake and wild, to find at last
Some worthless potsherd glittering in the sun,
So all my pleasures when attain'd prov'd false;
I knew how Eva loved, and whom she loved,
And yet some demon prompted me to hint
That I alone was cherish'd in her heart;
Hubert had always been so just and true,
So generous, and for his goodness I believe
I envied him, and strove to make him show
Some fault, some failing, balancing my own;
But when that fatal night, I read his heart,
And found how noble, and how pure it was,
My better angel crept into my soul,
And I resolv'd at once to speak the truth,

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And crave his pardon, and I left the tower,
Running at headlong speed upon his track
To catch him quickly, for I knew his will,
And that the morning's light would find him gone,
With that foul lie embittering his life;
So rushing on at speed along the path,
I tript, and fell upon the granite rocks,
Cutting my face and hands, and must have bled
Full freely as I found when I arose;
The blow too stunn'd me, and I lay as dead
Perchance an hour, and then my sense came back,
And shaking off the dizziness I felt, rose to my feet.
Another moment would have found me flown,
Straight for the Hall, but from the chasm's brink—
So close beside me—curious sounds arose;
Murmur of voices, and a rumbling noise,
As though of thunder rolling under-ground.
Then wondering strangely, and with stealthy step
Creeping towards it, soon I gain'd the edge
And peering down, saw far away beneath,
The glimmer of a light within the cleft;
That very instant, turning quickly round—

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I heard a step behind me on the bank—
I saw three men, rough-clad in sailor's garb,
Running towards me; soon as they were near,
I saw the mischief lurking in their eyes,
As shouting, 'Spy,' the tallest of the three
Clos'd quickly with me, and the other two,
Despite my struggles and my cries for aid,
Bore me with many a blow upon the ground.
Sight, hearing, feeling, pass'd again away,
Until I woke—it seemed to be a dream—
Within the vaulted chambers of a tomb,
Where I lay bound and helpless on the floor;
I turn'd my eyes towards a glimmering light,
Where I could see some figures round a fire,
Great bales and tubs, and many a dirk and gun;
After much mutter'd talk, with angry looks,
The tallest of the men, who on the cliff,
First struck me down, strode up beside me,
And pressed a pistol close against my ear;
'Attempt to raise a cry, my friend,' he said,
'And you will bear a bullet in your brain—
Be silent, you may live another hour—

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We do not care for blood, upon this coast;
But you can hear no doubt the flowing tide?
Within an hour the waves will reach us here;
Then shall we roll again that heavy stone,
That fits so neatly to that narrow space—
The cavern's entrance—then a boat will come,
And we shall reach our vessel in the bay;
And you, my friend, though your disguise be good,
Will find it has not answer'd quite so well
As you expected, when you came to spy;
For we have seen enough upon your arm
To damn you for a spy, you creeping hound!
That cursed crown and anchor tells a tale,
Although you do not wear it on your coat.
You hear those waves? Another little hour,
They will be round you hissing in your ears;
We shall unbind you—not to let you free—
For as our boat shoves off, a heavy blow
Will leave the waves at power to work their will;
And in the morning, when the ebbing tide
Shall bare again these rocks, we shall be gone;
And you a corpse drawn seaward too, perchance

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Cast up again, a sight for curious eyes;
And should men find you, they will weave a tale
To match your fate, and fancy how you fell
Down-crashing to the sea, from off those crags.'

"I told him how I met my brother there,
Of all that pass'd, gave him my name, and swore
I was no spy; but still he shook his head,
And would not hear, and then my spirit rose;
I saw he fancied I was of those men,
Who in the new-made station on the cliffs,
Guarded our coast; and then again I spoke.
'Unbind my limbs, and let me stand upright,
Then if I look a traitor or a spy,
Why shoot me down, or leave me to my death
In any way you will, I fear it not,
I would but save a brother from his doom.'

"And then a sudden thought upheld me more;
What if I join them? it might save my life—
And it would be a strange adventure too—
And one to talk about in after days;

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So I continued in another strain.
'Come, captain—for I see you are in power—
No need to kill me, let me join your crew,
For I am strong and hardy as you see,
And having worked among you, surely then,
Your sense will show you, I can be no spy;
For I myself shall then be in your power,
And if you find me false, my life, as now,
Will still be in your hands; come let me join,
And you will save your soul at least from crime.
Give me a scrap of paper, let me write
A few short lines, and spare a man at once,
To bear them to the Hall; then I am yours.'

"So he retir'd again among his men,
But soon return'd, and told me I was free
To share their life; but that he had no man
Whom he could spare—the time was pressing then—
And then commenc'd to free me from my bonds.
But I cried, 'Stay—unless you will agree
To let me write a note, which you can read,
And send a man to bear it to the Hall,

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I will not join you—I will meet my fate."

"So after speaking with his men again,
He brought a pencil and a tatter'd page—
Swore somewhat hotly that he was a fool—
And then unbound me, and I wrote some words,
To tell my brother all the bitter truth
Concerning Eva—said that I had gone
To see the world, but would return ere long,
When all between us should be bright and clear.

"The man then hurried off, but soon return'd
Declaring he had left it at the Hall.
Then was the heavy stone again replac'd
Before the secret cave—the tide came up,
With it a boat, that bore us from the shore
Towards a lugger, under press of sail;
And when the sun was rising from the sea,
The rugged cliffs, then looming far astern,
Grew dim and dimmer in its golden gleams.

"Well, I will cast a veil on much hereafter,

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Let it now suffice, to say I suffer'd :
We changed our vessel when in other seas,
And then were sailing in a well-arm'd craft,
That spoke her errand—pretty plainly too ;
The lugger had return'd with hands enough
To work her safely, and we steer'd due south.
Soon saw I far too much to give me hope,
Better, far better, thought I, had I died
The death that threaten'd me within the cave,
Than ever to have join'd this miscreant crew ;
I thought them simple smugglers at the worst,
I found them pirates of the deepest dye,
Dealers in slaves, and devils in their deeds ;
They hated me, too, as I hated them,
Because they saw, though I restrain'd my words,
How much I loathed their acts and company ;
And how I chafed, when one in sneering tones
Inform'd me that the letter I had scrawl'd,
To Hubert, in the cave, had not been sent ;
But that the man who bore it, cast it down,
And crush'd it in into atoms 'neath his heel,
And then return'd—and as they laugh'd, I raged.

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"So they suspected me, and watch'd me well,
And cut off all escape, and in all ways
Heap'd on me every insult: till one day—
Driven to madness by their cruel deeds—
I could not hold, and hotly spoke my mind;
Whereat the captain smote me with his sword,
And sent me reeling, bloody, to the deck;
Then I sprang up, and with a desperate bound—
Snatching a pistol from a sailor's side—
Flash'd it full at him, miss'd him, and sank down
Beneath the furious blows that rain'd around.

"Then for two days I lay within the hold,
Securely iron'd, parching in my thirst;
But on the second night, expecting death,
They brought me food and drink and dress'd my wounds.
I could not understand this sudden change,
Until one morning several men came down,
Knock'd off my irons, bound my hands with rope,
And cast me roughly down within a boat,
Then row'd to shore; and there the captain stood

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Conferring with a chief of evil mien—
I saw his vengeance, even before he said—
'If I had slain you, as you well deserved,
You now would be at rest; but I do more,
For I consign you to a living death,
And sell your worthless carcass for a slave:
Here, take him, chief, and use him as you will.'

"Prick'd by the chieftain's spear I stumbled on—
Entreaties would be useless, well I knew—
And so toil'd on throughout the burning day
Wounded, and weary, till we reach'd his tribe.

"For many years I drew my wretched breath,
Seeing no hope or chance of an escape;
Till after several services conferr'd,
I gain'd somewhat the favour of the chief;
I feign'd content, and then my guards relax'd
A little of their vigilance, and gave me leave
To come and go at will about the camp;
They thought me safe, for we had travell'd far,
Far, from the coast, but little did they know

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How dearer was my liberty than life,
I bided but my time, my plans were laid.

"At last I fled away, and reach'd the Cape—
Passing through dangers, yet surmounting all—
And then befriended by some generous men,
To whom I told my tale, I soon took ship,
And under favouring winds proceeded home;
When as we near'd old England's shores at last,
That furious storm broke forth, and drove our ship,
A total wreck, upon your rocky coast.
Now, rector, you know all—as he began,
So have I ended his life's mystery."

Again a clear spring dawn is breaking fast
On the grey cliffs above the rocky bay;
Bright as that morning when the rector first
Reading brave Hubert's heart, walk'd by his side,
And cheer'd the courage of his drooping soul.
The cottage stands there still, but by its side
A pleasant mansion glistens in the sun;
And there lives Gerald, doing good to all,

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ON GUARD.

A WAR-WORN knight, on guard, I stand
Beneath the waning moon;
All arm'd and ready, for the fray
I know will gather soon.
A golden crown around my helm,
Jewell'd and chas'd, I wear,
And for my crest, a serpent twin'd
Round three sharp barbs I bear.
And floating o'er me, rustling plumes,
Damp with the dews of night;
Droop down like wings on either side,
In colour, blue and white.
There, faintly glittering in the gloom,
My azure shield I see;
With this device, a broad band "or,"
Three "argent" fleurs de lys.

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Thus musing on these various signs,
Strange warnings do I read;
Pray God they help me in the fight,
And aid me at my need.
The azure shield is heavenly love,
Marr'd by the lust of gold;
The silver lilies, saintly thoughts
To keep me pure and bold.
And those sharp barbs are rankling sins,
By worldly wisdom bred;
Christ, keep those arrows from my heart,
That serpent from my head.
The whispering plumes that o'er me wave,
Bear message from Thy dove;
"Be merciful to fallen foes,
Be faithful in your love."
And round my helm a golden crown,
Gleaming with gems I see,
Grant, Lord, that when the fight be o'er,
Thy crown may be for me.

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GHOSTS.

WHEN in sorrow and adversity I lay,
All the friends of summer days pass'd away,
They seem'd dead;
And at first I troubled sore,
And I mourn'd for them the more,
On my bed.
But now, more prosperous grown,
I find they've not all flown,
From their post;
For oft crowding in my way,
I meet after break of day,
Many a ghost!
And smiling as they smile,
And receiving each the while
As a friend;

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I turn back Time's dry sands,
And take the shadowy hands
They extend :
But as each ghost draweth nigh,
As I stare at it, I sigh,
Truth has fled ;
It is but the phantom form,
Of a heart that once was warm,
It is dead !

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SUNSHINE AND SHADE.

O SIREN, that sits half in sunshine, half shade,
With golden gleams on your glittering hair,
The blue shadows fall at your pearly feet,
And I am lying a captive there;
Oh! sing me a song that shall soothe me to rest,
For my heart, with my hopes, is beginning to fail,
And death would be sweet, were it breath'd into me,
From the lips of the siren who smiles as she sings,
In the city that sleeps by the sea.

Oh! raise me, and hold me, and sing me to sleep,
Press'd close to the blossom that blooms on your breast,
And drunk with the perfume I draw to my soul,
Let me swoon on the bosom that rocks me to rest;
Fair siren, pour o'er me the balm of your breath,
But veil with their lashes those violet eyes;

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For each glance that they give is an arrow to me,
At the feet of the siren who sighs as she sings,
In the city that sleeps by the sea.

But no ! she is cruel, half love and half scorn,
So I lie in the shadow that falls at her feet,
And gaze up at the sunlight that flushes her brow,
Debarr'd from the warmth that my soul longs to meet;
Oh ! unspell me, unbind me, and give me my rest,
In the gloom of a night that shall ne'er wake to morn,
For as love has departed, no joy comes to me,
At the feet of the siren who slays as she smiles,
In the city that sleeps by the sea.

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UTOPIA.

I DREAM'D a dream of a city
Pure as a pearl of the sea ;
Where riches were but a burden,
And the poor were joyous and free.
Where the parson preach'd from his pulpit
The Truth—and where paupers were fed ;
Where no bishop was ever a bigot,
Or like wolf in sheep's clothing, misled.
Where no lawyer cheated his client,
No barrister bullied for gain ;
But where every man as a brother,
Would weep for his neighbour in pain.
Where physicians used wisdom with kindness,
And return'd to the poor their fees ;
Where the vintner when brewing his vintage,
Mix'd no poisonous drugs with its lees.

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Where the laws were just and equal,
One law for the great and the small;
Where the king rul'd by love and affection,
And no wars were heard of at all.
Where no palace of gilded corruption,
Rose out of the mud of the street;
But where children were rear'd in honour,
And each woman with virtue was sweet.
Where scandal was never spoken,
And in business no merchant, for gold,
Would embezzle the goods of another,
But where all men were honest and bold.
I dream'd this dream of a city,
But awoke with the wail of the sea,
Sighing over the desolate marshes,
"Such a city never could be."

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THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

DARK, 'midst a golden sea
Of wind-beaten cornfields,
Stands a deserted house.
The tall trees that surround it
Are glimmering spectral and sere
In the shades of the evening.
The owl with foreboding cry,
Sobs and moans in the ivy;
The brown bat on noiseless wings
Glides forth from the casement,
Where the glass has dropt from the pane,
And the woodwork has rotted.
The garden teeming with weeds
Is neglected and dreary;
And where, 'midst the dense rank growth,
Some delicate flower-bud

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Struggles to get to the light,
And uplifts its pale blossoms;
It but adds to the sorrowful scene,
And tells a true story
Of joys that have pass'd and fled,
Of old faces forgotten;
Of gentle nurturing hands,
More frail than the flowret
They cherish'd and rear'd with such care,
Ere they faded for ever.
Over all a dark heavy cloud
Hangs threat'ning and low'ring,
Tipt by the hornèd moon;
And like some huge demon,
It hovers and broods o'er the house,
As though watching its ruin.

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FOR EVER AND EVER.

DO we look enough at Nature,
When we talk of things to be?
Do we understand the teaching
Of the various signs we see,
Of the final dissolution
That sets every spirit free?
Shall we meet again in Heaven,
When our souls shall cease to dwell
In their earthly habitations?—
Shall we meet again in Hell?—
Or do we in the winter
Drop like leaves upon the ground,
Where, in the early spring-time,
Their skeletons are found,
'Neath the shadow of the verdure
Springing freshly all around?

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Does the dead leaf rise again,
To bud once more upon the bough?—
Or is its end accomplish'd?
Yet must we not allow
That its fall doth fertilize the soil,
For the new buds forming now?
When the butterfly, benumb'd and chill'd,
Droops its gaily gilded wings,
'Neath the first sharp frost of winter,
That a certain death-doom brings,
Does it raise again its fairy form,
Quick quivering as it springs,
Do we recognise its loveliness,
And gorgeous plumage rare,
In the speck of dusty atoms
Minutely mouldering there?
Yet has it left behind it
A thousand tiny germs,
From whence in genial weather
Spring a thousand tiny worms,
Again to float on pinions bright,
But on the self-same terms.

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So our bodies vanish and decay
To dust within the tomb,
So our children take our places,
To fulfil the self-same doom.
But our spirits—but our spirits?
Shall we ever live again?
Shall we smile with joy in Paradise,
Or weep in Hell's sharp pain,
Or shall we fall away to nought,
Dead leaves beneath the rain?
Shall we find once more our enemies
In other worlds than this?—
Shall we fly to clasp our dearest friends,
In ecstacy of bliss?—
Or do we part for ever,
When we take the last cold kiss?
O Eternity—all-dreaded,
Wrapt in the dusky veil,
Brooding above that "Sea of Space,"
"Where worlds unnumber'd sail,"
Thou that shalt never have an end,
Canst thou ever have begun?—

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Art thou not a glorious circle,
As the ring around a sun ?—
For deform thee to a crescent,
And all train of thought is done.
So must we have been from ever,
As for ever we shall be,
Let our children take our places,
Fresher leaves upon the tree,
For when we fall upon the ground,
Death sets some essence free,
That flies through space to other worlds,
Again the newly-born,
Ever to pass from dark'ning night,
To hail a bright'ning morn.
And we shall meet each other,
Shall love and hate again,
Shall find both friends and enemies,
Shall suffer joy and pain,
Shall ever try to pierce the Past
And Future, but in vain ;
Except when some faint glimmering light,
Shall flash from Dream-land's shore,

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Whene'er we meet a kindred soul,
And clasping it the more,
Feel, though we scarcely dare believe,
That we have met before.
Then hoping, ever trusting,
There are other worlds than this,
Where our sorrows will be neutraliz'd
By love, and peace, and bliss,
When we cast aside our bodies
As garments worn and old,
When we leave our poor possessions,
And give up our paltry gold;
Let us hoping, never fearing,
Go with hearts both meek and bold,
To essay the Ordered Future
That before each mortal lies;
Trusting the Power that gives, and takes,
Subtracts and multiplies.

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DREAMING.

YOU were near me in a dream, dear,
When the gold sun pass'd away,
And the earth was chastely sleeping
'Neath the silver moon-beam's ray;
And you turn'd your face towards me,
Laid your hand upon my breast,
And my troubled heart beat gently,
In a calm and peaceful rest;
And your eyes, so softly shining,
Shed their lustrous light above,
And your gentle lips, my darling,
Murmur'd words of hope and love.
Then I heard loud voices near me,
And my happy dream was fled,
And I woke to all my sorrows,
And I wish'd that I were dead;

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That my soul might hover round you,
To ward off every harm,
And to wrap you from life's storms
In tranquillity's sweet calm:
Till death should take my darling,
And should lead her as a friend,
To those bright and glorious regions,
Where all distinctions end;
And that there, that I might claim her,
Till eternity should seem
To be but the fair fulfilment,
Of that happy, happy dream.

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AMONG THE BREAKERS.

I WAS wearily watching beside his bed
As his life was ebbing away;
And a wistful look in the eyes of each,
Utter'd more than all words could say.

I thought of the time when a boy, from a hill,
I gaz'd down on the storm-ridg'd strand;
Where a batter'd wreck lay breaking to bits,
Engulf'd in the treacherous sand.

And I knew that he thought of as brave a bark,
As e'er sail'd o'er the harbour bar;
He had once watch'd beating against the wind,
With torn canvass and splintering spar.

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From the wreck on the sand, the returning tide
Drew daily some portion away ;
While the storm-tost bark near the sharp-rock'd shore,
Straining hard at its anchors lay.

The ship on the sands and the bark near the rocks,
Once sail'd from the self-same shore ;
And both were bound to the self-same port,
That neither shall reach any more.

They kept together on putting to sea,
For one of them carried the chart ;
The other the compass to guide them both,
But a bitter wind blew them apart.

I wearily watching—he waiting for rest,
We look'd in each other's eyes ;
And each could have told to each, if he would,
Where the cause of such shipwreck lies.

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"AND Olaf sware, by Odin and by Thor, a bitter oath—'They that carried my father's heart from me, while it was living, they alone shall bear it when that it be dead.'" M.S.

GO to thy grave, brave heart—
That has often battled with mine—
Sleeping surrounded with oak,
A viking gone to his rest;
If I were not of thy kin,
And shar'd not the fire of thy blood,
I might be near thee now,
To pour hot tears on thy breast.
Go to thy grave, grand heart,
Though thou wilt not be borne by me;
As thou hast liv'd, thou hast died,
Misled, for they hated the free;
I, who troubled thee once,
Trouble thee now no more,
For in thy grave, dear heart,
Thy troubles and sorrows are o'er.

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Sea-kings—sons of the sea!
Judge 'twixt the living and dead,
Welcome him—welcome me,
And bring me into his rest;
Grant that in Odin's land—
Wherever that land may be—
The father and son may meet—
Both sons of the sons of the sea.
Let them rant and rave
Their mockeries over his tomb,
I can hear the voice
Of a spirit that now is free—
"If thou hast sworn, thou hast sworn,
And must stand by thine oath, my son,
If when meeting in Odin's halls
Thou would'st wish to be greeted by me,
True son of the proud hot blood
Of the stern old kings of the sea."

THE END.

JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, 74 AND 75, PICCADILLY.

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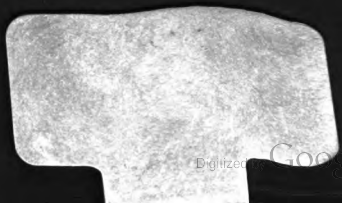
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